

*William Dunbar*

*The Complete Works*

## *The Works of William Dunbar*

### *Introduction*

The Scottish poet William Dunbar lived during the final decades of the fifteenth century and the initial decades of the sixteenth. Although his early years and final years are shrouded in uncertainty, throughout much of his adult life he was closely associated with the royal court of James IV of Scotland (r. 1488–1513), a court that provided the social backdrop as well as the specific impetus for many of Dunbar's poems. Dunbar belongs to a significant group of late-medieval Scottish poets who are generally known as the Middle Scots Poets or the Scottish Makars, a group that includes the author of *The Kingis Quair* (possibly James I of Scotland), Richard Holland, Robert Henryson, Gavin Douglas, and Sir David Lindsay. Henryson and Dunbar are usually considered the two major writers from among the Middle Scots Poets and are often viewed as being two of the most important figures in fifteenth-century British literature. Dunbar, moreover, may lay claim to being the finest lyric poet writing in English in the century and a half between the death of Chaucer in 1400 and the appearance of Tottel's *Miscellany* in 1557.

Dunbar's poems offer vivid depictions of late-medieval Scottish society and serve up a striking pageant of colorful figures at James IV's court. Some of these figures are portrayed favorably but more often they are targets of the poet's satire, satire that tends to be scornful and derisive rather than bemused and good-natured. Several of Dunbar's poems also offer hints and suggestions about the poet himself, suggestions that have sometimes been used as a basis for speculations about Dunbar's life. But the truth is that we possess very little information about William Dunbar that can be verified by external documentation. What information we do possess comes primarily from three sources: the *Acta* of the University of St. Andrews, *The Register of the Privy Seal*, and, most importantly, *The Treasurer's Accounts* (*Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*), which contain the records of expenditures for the royal household during James IV's reign.

The date and place of the poet's birth are not known, but there is little doubt that William Dunbar was a Lowland Scot whose origins were in the Lothian area of southeastern Scotland. Perhaps the poet actually grew up in or near the town of Dunbar, which is located on the North Sea midway between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Edinburgh. It is very likely that William Dunbar the poet is the same William Dunbar who attended St. Andrews University, "determining" (receiving his bachelor's degree) in 1477, and becoming "licentiate" (receiving his master's degree) in 1479. If this is so, and if Dunbar was about twenty years old when he received his first degree from St. Andrews, then he was probably born in the late 1450s. For

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the first decades of Dunbar's adulthood, 1480 to 1500, no documentary evidence has come to light. Several of his poems suggest that at some period during his life he engaged in extensive foreign travels, and it is possible that those travels would have occurred during this time. The historical records do indicate that during 1500–01 Dunbar was in England, for the Treasurer's Accounts show that a payment was made to him in 1501, "after he com furth of Ingland" (2.95). It is quite possible that Dunbar was among the group of Scots who were making arrangements for the marriage of James IV to Princess Margaret, the daughter of the English monarch Henry VII. It is also possible that Poem 29, for which the Maitland Folio colophon reads "Quod Dunbar at Oxinfurde" (i.e., Oxford), was written about this time.

For the years 1501 to 1513, when the poet was serving in the court of James IV, many entries in the Treasurer's Accounts refer to Dunbar. Most of these entries record payments made to him such as his pension (his annual pay), his livery (a clothing allowance he periodically received), and other minor gifts and remuneration. During this period Dunbar was clearly a "servitor" at the court of James IV, although we can not be certain about the specific capacities in which he served. Very likely he was employed within the royal secretariat as a scribe, secretary, or envoy (quite possibly some combination of these things), and perhaps he also served during this time as a court chaplain. It is even possible that for some portion of this time Dunbar may have served as either the king's or the queen's personal priest. Dunbar's petition poems (Poems 37–53), which were almost certainly written between 1501 and 1510, offer some of the best internal evidence for Dunbar's activities during this period. These poems reflect very clearly the poet's intense desire to be granted a benefice, an endowed church office that provided its holder with a secure, and sometimes substantial, annual income. They also suggest that Dunbar had long aspired to attaining a position of prominence within the church, but it appears that this last aspiration was never fulfilled. The records do show, however, that Dunbar's pension was doubled in 1507 to £20 a year, and that in August of 1510 it was raised yet again, this time to the very substantial sum of £80 a year.

The final mention of Dunbar in the historical records occurs in May of 1513. In the following September the reign of James IV came to a tragic end at the Battle of Flodden, where the Scottish king and 9,000 of his fellow Scots, including many earls, bishops, and abbots, perished at the hands of the English army. It is possible that Dunbar was one of those who died at Flodden Field on that early fall day in 1513, but most scholars incline to the view that he survived on into the reign of James V. There is no documentary evidence to prove that this was so because the Treasurer's Accounts for the period from August of 1513 until June of 1515 no longer exist. It is possible that Poem 34, which was written to provide comfort for a grieving widow, is Dunbar's expression of sympathy for Queen Margaret following James IV's death; if so, it would indicate that Dunbar was alive after the Battle of Flodden. But Poem 34 is one of the poems of disputed authorship (Priscilla Burwett excludes it from her recent edition), and, furthermore, the poem does not identify the widow who is being addressed, and there were many widows of Scottish noblemen following the Battle of Flodden (if indeed her

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widowhood is meant to be tied to that event). We can be certain, however, that Dunbar died sometime prior to 1530, when Sir David Lindsey wrote his *Testament of Papyego*, for, in the opening verses of that poem, Lindsey laments the deaths of the great Scottish poets, including Dunbar.

### **Dunbar's Poetry**

Scholars and editors agree that William Dunbar is the author of slightly more than eighty poems. Although Dunbar's possible authorship of a small number of poems continues to be a matter of debate, on the whole there is a good deal of consensus about which poems comprise the Dunbar canon. The principal difficulty for modern editors in establishing the poet's canon stems from the fact that the *Bannatyne Manuscript* and the *Maitland Folio*, two of the most important early witnesses of Dunbar's poetry, sometimes disagree in their attribution of poems. In several instances one of these sources will credit a particular poem to Dunbar when the other source considers that same poem to be anonymous or even attributes it to some other poet. In fact, there are a few poems that Dunbar's editors believe to be his that are not actually attributed to him in any of the early witnesses. But at this point Dunbar's canon has been established with a good deal of certitude, and we can be confident that the eighty-three or eighty-four poems usually attributed to him are very likely his.

Dunbar's poems are remarkable both for their diversity and variability and for their multiplicity of voices, styles, and tones. They treat a wide range of subjects and themes and reflect the characteristics of many different literary genres, forms, and modes. They range from the sacred to the profane, including devotional poems of the greatest seriousness and rarified beauty, and comic and parodic poems of extreme salaciousness and scatological coarseness. Many of them are highly traditional and conventional, while others are highly innovative and experimental. Some are backward looking and thoroughly medieval, and some seem completely imbued with the spirit of the English Renaissance. Dunbar's poems praise and sometimes imitate his great English predecessors — Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate — and it is accurate to say that his poetry represents the culmination of medieval poetic practice. At the same time, it is also appropriate to point out that some of his poems seem to anticipate the poetry of such sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets as Wyatt and Donne, Herbert and Milton, and, in Scottish literary tradition, the poetry of Robert Burns.

The great variety of poems within Dunbar's canon includes religious hymns of exaltation, moral poems on a wide range of serious themes, general satires against the times, and satires with much more specific targets, often a single individual. Dunbar's canon also includes allegorical poems and dream visions, poems that celebrate or critique or repudiate courtly love, laudatory poems and panegyrics, poems of vituperation and invective, and precatory poems (poems of request, or petition poems) addressed to the king or queen. There are also wildly

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exuberant comic poems and various kinds of literary burlesques and parodies, and there are a few longer poems that are more narrative than lyrical. Clearly, pinning labels to Dunbar's poems is not always easy; many of them reflect simultaneously the distinctive characteristics of several poetic sub-categories, and the classification of some of his poems remains a matter of scholarly dispute.

But perhaps above all else Dunbar is a satirist. A large number of his poems are undoubtedly satiric in intent and fall clearly within this mode. Others that are not so obviously subversive in their intentions contain satiric elements and asides. It is the poet's impulse towards satire that is perhaps the single most common feature of his literary art, and for Dunbar that mode is usually tinged with the darker emotional hues — often suggesting the poet's own sense of anger, frustration, disappointment, and disillusionment. Thus the satire in Dunbar's poems more often tends to be derisive and scornful rather than light-hearted and gently mocking, and several of his poems appear to have been written with the explicit intention to expose and humiliate. They are much more akin to the darker and more cynical tone found in a work such as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* than they are to the subtler varieties of satire seen in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Dunbar, in contrast to Chaucer, rarely works by indirection. He does occasionally employ irony, but he is usually overt and direct in his comic subversions. Dunbar rarely leaves any doubt in his satiric poems about the thoughts and emotions in his mind and heart.

Dunbar's poems reflect several distinctive voices and styles. One of the voices often sounded in his moral poems, for example, is that of a stern preacher who is admonishing his hearers to attend to their spiritual and moral needs. Many of Dunbar's petition poems, on the other hand, seem to reflect a very personal voice, a voice that gives every appearance of being the poet's own voice. Stylistically, Dunbar's poems are marked by the use of several highly contrastive forms of diction. The most distinctive feature in several of his poems is what scholars call *aureation* or *aureate diction*, a very formal and artificial diction that uses many words of Latin derivation, some of which appear to be original coinages. A term that Dunbar himself might use for such language is *armorial* ("enamelled"), which aptly describes the brilliant, glossy surface so characteristic of these poems. Dunbar's aureate diction is found in several of his formal, ceremonial poems (e.g., "The Thistle and the Rose" — Poem 30), in some of his courtly love poetry (e.g., *The Golden Targe* — Poem 65), and perhaps most pronouncedly in his poem in praise of the Virgin, "A Ballad of Our Lady" (Poem 4). Contrasting with Dunbar's aureate diction is his use of the language of colloquial insult; indeed there can be little doubt but that Dunbar has mastered the fine art of name-calling. Several of his poems, both from among his petition poems and from among his satiric poems, reflect his genius in this regard. "To the King" (Schir, ye have mony servitouris — Poem 46) is one of the best examples, as is *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* (Poem 83). An especially intriguing example of it occurs in "In a Secret Place" (Poem 72), in which the catalogue of extremely colloquial names

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the speakers apply to each other are meant to be terms of endearment rather than degrading insults.

Another important characteristic of Dunbar's versatility may be seen in the poet's metrical virtuosity. A few of his poems are written in rhyming couplets (Poems 5, 45, 46, and 81) and one, *The Tretis of the Twa Marit Women and the Wedo* (Poem 84), is written in the Middle English alliterative long line.<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of his poems, however, are written in short stanzas with complex rhyme schemes. In most of these poems the stanzas contain anywhere from four to eight verses, with most of them having refrains. One of Dunbar's favorite forms is the five-line stanza rhyming *aabbA*, a form he uses sixteen times. Nearly as common is his use of quatrains rhyming *aabb*, with the final line being a refrain, a form he uses eleven times. In the case of these two much-favored stanzaic forms, there does not appear to be any common denominator — regarding such things as theme or tone or subject matter — that would logically group them together. But that does seem to be the case with some of the other verse forms that Dunbar employs. For example, all the poems written in the seven-line stanza with the *aabbcbc* rhyme scheme are pieces of comic or satiric verse (Poems 56, 60, 69, 72, and 74). Similarly, all of the poems written in the seven-line stanza form known as rhyme royal (iambic pentameter poems with an *ababcc* rhyme scheme) are serious and/or courtly poems, in accordance with established practice in the later Middle Ages. Another form Dunbar uses for serious and/or celebratory poems is the *ballade*, an eight-line stanza rhyming *ababbcbbC* in which the final line is a refrain; he employs this verse form in sixteen poems. The only exception to this general rule is *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* (Poem 83), where he uses the *ballade* form (though without the refrain) for comic purposes. A final stanzaic form that Dunbar sometimes employs is the tail-rhyme stanza. Although he only uses it a few times (Poems 54, 55, 67, and 77), when he does, it is always for comic or satiric purposes.

### *The Arrangement of the Poems*

Most previous editors of Dunbar's poetry have tended to arrange the poems according to their subject matters or their formal characteristics or some combination of the two. Although such arrangements are inevitably subjective and somewhat arbitrary, there are few attractive or feasible alternatives. Priscilla Bawcutt, Dunbar's most recent editor, has chosen to present the poems alphabetically according to the first word of the first line. This neutral arrangement has a distinctive advantage in that it "permits poems to be read without over-explicit labeling of their subject or 'kind'" (Bw 1.21). Certainly, such an ordering of the poems has much to be

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of Dunbar's use of alliterative conventions in his poetry, see A. A. MacDonald, "Alliterative Poetry and Its Context: The Case of William Dunbar."

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said for it, but in practical terms it also has some very significant drawbacks; Bawcutt herself recognizes this when in a handful of instances she is forced to deviate from her own plan. Indeed, perhaps the advantages to such a "neutral" ordering of the poems are offset by the inconvenience to the reader who wishes to view Dunbar's poems in relationship to each other. For that simple reason it seems better to do what other editors have done and attempt to arrange the poems into logical groupings. A second reason to do this is that many of Dunbar's poems are obviously companion pieces to each other, and there are even several short sequences of poems that are directly interconnected. It makes little sense not to place such poems adjacent to one another. Furthermore, it makes a good deal of sense to print all of Dunbar's petition poems together as a group, and to print all of his courtly love poems as a group. To do this is not to deny that there will always be differences of opinion in regard to which of his poems actually are his petition poems or actually do pertain to courtly love.

The plan adopted here is to begin with Dunbar's serious poems and to end with his comic ones. Within this scheme Dunbar's poetry has been divided into four large categories. The first of them includes Dunbar's religious and moral poems, which comprise about a third of his canon. The second sub-grouping includes the poems that directly relate to the poet's life as a figure in the court of James IV. This group is followed by the small number of poems that Dunbar wrote in the medieval tradition of *fis' amor* — his poems pertaining to courtly love. The final group is a sprawling and rather heterogeneous set of poems that are comic, satiric, and parodic, and in the case of some of them, scatological and obscene.

#### **Poems Devotional and Moral**

About a third of the poems in the Dunbar canon provide serious treatment of religious or moral topics. Poems 1–3 — which have many of the characteristics we associate with church hymns — celebrate biblical events of great importance to medieval Christians: the Nativity, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection. "A Ballad of Our Lady" (Poem 4), similarly, reflects the medieval theme of the Adoration of the Virgin Mary. "In Praise of Women" (Poem 5) is less specifically religious in nature and appears to celebrate women in general and mothers particularly, yet it is also clearly intended to venerate the Holy Mother of God. Indeed, it is possible that the poem as we have it is the opening section of what was once a much longer poem celebrating the Virgin.

Among Dunbar's devotional poetry is a small group of penitential poems. Poems 6–9, works closely associated with the liturgical season of Lent. These poems are especially concerned with the spiritual preparation Christians should make prior to going to confession during Holy Week. The speaker in "The Manner of Going to Confession" (Poem 6) admonishes his audience to search their consciences and reflect upon their sins in order to achieve the spiritual condition known as contrition, while the speaker in "The Table of Confession" (Poem 7)

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provides a comprehensive guide to the sins and reminds its audience of the fundamental tenets of medieval Christian doctrine. "All Earthly Joy Returns to Pain" (Poem 8) and "Of Man's Mortality" (Poem 9) focus on Ash Wednesday, the day that initiates the Lenten season; this pair of poems also introduces us to the poet's concern with human mortality and earthly mutability, but their main focus continues to be on penitence, contrition, and confession. In "An Orison" (Poem 10), a brief and simple devotional poem, the speaker acknowledges his sensual desires but also expresses his heartfelt wish to atone for his sins. "Of the World's Vanity" (Poem 11), one of Dunbar's most conventional expressions of the theme of earthly mutability, is not explicitly about confession, but that concern is perhaps implied. In this poem, as in several others, the speaking voice is that of a preacher who is admonishing his listeners to heed his words.

A few of Dunbar's moral poems are concerned with "the four last things" — Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. "Of Life" (Poem 12) suggests that we can experience a short-lived torment and an everlasting bliss, or a short-lived joy and an everlasting sorrow. "Of the Changes of Life" (Poem 13) focuses on the alternation of joy and woe in this life but offers no suggestions about how to achieve a more lasting joy when this life ends. Two of Dunbar's most acclaimed moralities are "The Lament for the Makars" (Poem 14) and "A Meditation in Winter" (Poem 15). "The Lament for the Makars" is a poignant meditation on the inevitability of death in the *memento mori* tradition. The speaker tells us that Death comes for everyone, regardless of social class or professional accomplishments, and no exception is made for poets. Despite the poem's somber tone, however, there is a slight upswing at the end when we are reminded that life in this world should be viewed as preparation for the life to come. In "A Meditation in Winter" the speaker's melancholy stems from the oppressive winter weather with its long nights and dark, cheerless days; in this case the speaker is able to dispel his dreary thoughts by contemplating the joyful return of spring.

Boethian elements appear in many of Dunbar's moral poems but are especially prominent in Poems 16–22, works that share some similarities with the Chaucerian lyrics "Truth," "Fortune," and "Lak of Stedfastnesse." "None May Assurance in this World" (Poem 16), one of Dunbar's more intriguing moral poems, reflects the characteristics of several poetic types including the Boethian lyric (it specifically recalls Chaucer's "Lak of Stedfastnesse"), while Poems 17–19 are more narrowly concerned with achieving consolation in this world in the face of life's adversities. These poems counsel their hearers to be content with their lot, despite the apparent unfairness of life. "Best to Be Blithe" (Poem 17) is imbued with a strong sense of the speaker's personal pain, while "Without Gladness No Treasure Avails" (Poem 19), the most cheerful of these poems, encourages the listener to be merry and to enjoy what life has to offer. "His Own Enemy" (Poem 20) is one of Dunbar's more problematic moral poems, for while it seems to be advising its audience to enjoy what they are fortunate enough to possess, there is a sardonic quality to the poem that sets it apart from the others.

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"Spend Thine Own Goods" (Poem 21) and "Of Covetise" (Poem 22), while reflecting many conventional elements of the poem of moral advice, also begin to reflect the elements of courtly satire that seems to lie at the heart of the final sub-group of Dunbar's moral poems. The advice these poems offer is more secular and practical and concerns how to survive in the complex and often hostile environment existing at court. Several of Dunbar's moral poems focus on the importance of money and worldly goods and thus may be closely related to Dunbar's petition poems. "Of Deeming" (Poem 23) offers advice about how to cope with malicious gossip (ignore it and live as virtuously as you can); "How Should I Conduct Myself" (Poem 24) offers practical advice about how to conduct oneself; and "Rule of Oneself" (Poem 25), one of the most sententious in the Dunbar canon, suggests more broad-based counsel on how to cope with the uncertainties of life at court. Poems 26–28 are a series of interconnected poems that consider the "discretion" one should possess in regard to asking, giving, and taking. The three poems in this sequence share a common poetic form and employ similar refrains, yet each of them has a distinctive flavor. "Dunbar at Oxford" (Poem 29) is the final poem in this section. Here the moral advice is directed specifically at scholars, who are urged to pursue their intellectual achievements while maintaining a strong moral grounding.

### **Poems Public and Private**

The poems in this section reflect Dunbar's life and his professional responsibilities at court during the reign of James IV of Scotland. Some grow out of the poet's important public responsibilities at court, and a great many more of them stem from his more personal interactions with members of the court, including the king and the queen. The first group of poems, Poems 30–36, are occasional poems written to commemorate important public events. In some cases, as in "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30), which concerns the royal marriage of James to Margaret Tudor in 1503, these were events of national consequence. These celebratory poems suggest that Dunbar was often called upon to provide poems for special occasions. That appears to be the case in the group of the poems addressed to Queen Margaret (Poems 31–34) and in the two poems written in praise of Bernard Stewart (Poems 35 and 36). These great display pieces of public celebration contrast sharply with Dunbar's many other poems that concern the court of James IV, poems that are probably intended for a much more selective audience and whose purpose is primarily comedic and/or satiric rather than celebratory (Poems 50–60).

Far less easy to fathom, however, is the extensive group of poems comprising Dunbar's petitions. There are more than a dozen of these poems, many of which are addressed to "Schir" — undoubtedly King James IV himself — and most of them are direct or indirect appeals for the king's financial and professional support. It is also likely that the king was not their exclusive audience and that they were circulated among a small circle of the poet's friends.

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though just how private or public they actually were is impossible to determine. Some readers of Dunbar have found these poems unsightly and embarrassing, both because there are so many of them and because they often seem self-serving and sometimes self-pitying. These poems are intriguing because of the various suggestions they make about the poet's relationship to the king. Also within this group are a few poems of considerable artistic merit. Dunbar scholars generally agree that "To the King" (*Schir, ye have mony servitors* — Poem 46) is one of the poet's most subtle and artful poems; and every reader of Dunbar has been intrigued by the brief, somewhat enigmatic, and apparently highly personal poem often called "The Headache" (Poem 43). One of the poems in this group that especially appeals to the editor of this volume is "To the King" (*That I suld be ane Yowillis yald* — Poem 49), which develops and sustains a clever metaphorical comparison involving men and horses.

Poems 51–60 focus on a variety of people who were associated with the royal court. Some the poet admires, some he humorously satirizes or mocks, and some he scorns and viciously maligns. Poems 51–53 stand in close relationship to Dunbar's petition poems and once again testify to the poet's difficulties in securing the financial support he feels he deserves, and also to his worries about managing money once he has some. "To the Lord Treasurer" (Poem 52) and "To the Lords of Chalker" (Poem 53) are addressed to important financial officers of the court, the Lord Treasurer and the Lords of Chalker. The first of this pair of poems expresses the poet's delight at the treasurer's speedy return to Edinburgh, which means that he will be able to receive his pension without further delay. The second comically reveals to the Lords of Chalker, who were the auditors of the exchequer, that he is unable to account for the sudden and mysterious disappearance of the funds he had received. "The Antichrist" (Poem 51) and "A Ballad of the Friar of Tungland" (Poem 54) heap scorn and ridicule upon John Durmian, a colorful and flamboyant figure at James' court whom Dunbar considered a fraud and a charlatan, but who nonetheless received substantial support from the king, to Dunbar's considerable chagrin. Poems 56–58 concern figures belonging to Queen Margaret's personal entourage, and these poems may suggest that Dunbar was himself attached to the queen's service. And three of Dunbar's poems about figures at court — Poems 55, 59, and 60 — are apparently denunciations of actual people against whom Dunbar felt particularly aggrieved.

## **Poems in the Courtly Tradition**

The eight poems in this small group are all concerned with *fir'amor* (or "courtly love"), a pervasive and influential literary phenomenon that flourished from the twelfth century into the sixteenth. *Fir'amor* was an elaborate code of behavior and discourse that established guidelines for the conduct of amorous relationships between the sexes. It is a complex and controversial literary phenomenon and one that appears in many guises and permutations throughout the Middle Ages. In brief, it posited the sovereignty and superiority of the lady.

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whose male wooer was expected to perform long service and endure great suffering before his suit could be entertained or his amorous desires reciprocated. Some medieval writers seem to take the doctrines of *fie'amor* very seriously and others, particularly in the later Middle Ages, are more inclined to satirize them. One group of Dunbar's poems appears to celebrate *fie'amor* (Poems 61–64), while another clearly repudiates it (Poems 66–68). Posed between these two starkly contrasting attitudes is Dunbar's *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), which critics have variously interpreted, although it seems quite likely that the poem is more negative in its attitude toward courtly love than positive. Dunbar wrote relatively few poems in the courtly love tradition, but two of them — "Sweet Rose of Virtue" (Poem 61) and *The Golden Targe* — are often ranked among his most impressive works.

#### **Poems Comic, Satiric, and Parodic**

The sixteen poems in this group, although extremely heterogeneous, are all essentially comic. And, while they surely reflect a wide range of purposes and intentions, one of the central intentions in each of them is to provide amusement. Indeed, several of them were almost certainly written for public performances at court (Poems 71, 77, 83, and possibly 84). Several of them focus on various kinds of sexual comedy (Poems 69, 70, 72, 73, and 84), several humorously satirize members of the non-noble classes within Scottish society (Poems 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, and 82), and several are essentially literary parodies (Poems 71, 72, 80, and 81). By far the most celebrated poem within this group is *The Tretis of the Two Marit Women and the Wedo* (Poem 84), which Dunbar critics and scholars, without exception, consider one of his most important works. There is far less consensus on the literary merits of the poem which here precedes the *Tretis*, Poem 83, a poem containing Dunbar's war of words with his fellow poet Walter Kennedy — *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*. There can be little doubt, though, that these two final poems represent the most extreme and outrageous examples of excremental humor and sexual obscenity to be found within the Dunbar canon.

#### **The Early Texts and Manuscripts**

The texts of Dunbar's poems are preserved in a small number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century witnesses. Five of these early sources — a pair of printed texts, the Aberdeen Sasine Register, the Asloan Manuscript, and the Arundel Manuscript — all date from the poet's own lifetime or shortly thereafter. These sources, however, contain only a small number of Dunbar's poems. Far more are preserved in the three great Renaissance anthologies commonly

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known as the Bannatyne Manuscript, the Maitland Folio, and the Reidpath Manuscript. An additional source is the late sixteenth-century Osborn Manuscript, which contains the text of just one poem.

### 1. *The Early Printed Texts*

#### A) *Chepman and Myllar* (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland).

The texts of three of Dunbar's poems (Poems 35, 65, and 83) are contained in a series of small booklets that were printed in 1508 by Walter Chepman and Andrew Myllar, Scotland's first printers.

#### B) "The Rousen Print" (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland).

This early print also contains three of Dunbar's poems (Poems 14, 80, and 84); it is undated and typographically distinct from the Chepman and Myllar prints. Kinsley called it "the Rousen print," but some scholars believe that it was printed in Edinburgh rather than on the continent, possibly by Myllar before he and Chepman began their collaboration.

### 2. *The Aberdeen Summe Register* (Aberdeen, City Charter Room, The Town House).

Also called "The Aberdeen Minute Book," this multi-volume work, which was begun in 1484, is primarily a record of property transactions for the royal burgh of Aberdeen. In the margins and on some originally blank pages other writings are recorded, including several vernacular poems. Three of them (Poems 19, 33, and 82) are attributed to Dunbar; they are found in Volumes II and III (for the years 1502–07 and 1507–13, respectively).

### 3. *The Asloan Manuscript* (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland MS 16500).

This large miscellany, which contains works in both prose and verse, was probably compiled between 1515 and 1525. It bears the name of its primary scribe, John Asloan (or Sloane), a public notary in Edinburgh from the 1490s to the early 1530s. It contains the partial texts of three Dunbar poems (Poems 2, 54, and 77). It is especially important for preserving the only extant text of Poem 4, one of the finest examples of Dunbar's use of the aureate style, and his only poem written exclusively in praise of the Virgin Mary.

### 4. *The Arundel Manuscript* (London, British Library MS Arundel 285).

This manuscript, which probably dates to about the middle of the sixteenth century, is a fairly homogeneous collection of devotional pieces — poems, verse meditations, and prayers. It contains the texts of three of Dunbar's religious poems (Poems 2, 6, and 7).

### 5. *The Bannatyne Manuscript* (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 1.1.6).

The compiler of this important manuscript collection of early Scottish poetry was George Bannatyne (1545–1608), an Edinburgh merchant. Bannatyne states that he assembled his anthology in 1568, during a "tyme of pest." This extensive collection is in two parts. The main

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section contains 375 leaves, and the shorter section, which is either a partial draft or a partial duplicate copy, contains fifty-eight. The contents of the manuscript are quite varied, including both Scottish materials and English materials, and materials derived from both manuscript sources and early printed sources. Its overall design is indicated by Bannatyne's decision to arrange his materials in five major sections (each of which has several sub-sections), sections to which he gave the titles "ballatis of eseraltie," "ballatis mirry," "ballatis of theologie," "ballatis of love," and "fabillis." Each of Bannatyne's sections includes poems attributed to Dunbar, and in all, the Bannatyne MS preserves the texts of about forty of Dunbar's poems, nearly half the poet's canon.

6. *The Maitland Folio* (Cambridge, Pepys Library, Magdalene College MS 2553).

This great miscellany of 366 pages was compiled between 1570 and 1586. It contains poems by many poets, including a large number written by Sir Richard Maitland (1496–1586) and many others that were written in honor of Maitland. Interspersed throughout the folio are fifty-two poems that are specifically attributed to Dunbar, and ten more poems that Bannatyne had attributed to Dunbar. Thus the Maitland Folio preserves the texts of more than sixty Dunbar poems — nearly three-quarters of the entire canon. At one time this manuscript had contained even more of Dunbar's poems, as the Reidpath MS indicates.

7. *The Reidpath Manuscript* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS L1.v.10).

This manuscript, which is named for its copyist John Reidpath, is a partial transcript of the Maitland Folio. It is a folio volume of sixty-nine leaves, and as the copyist indicates, was begun in December of 1622. It contains fifty poems that scholars attribute to Dunbar. The special importance of the Reidpath MS, however, is that it is the only one of the earliest witnesses to preserve the texts for eight of Dunbar's poems. These poems were copied from a gathering of the Maitland Folio that is now lost. They are Poems 33, 36, 37, 42, 43, 52, 53, and 75.

8. *The Osborn Manuscript* (New Haven, CT, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Music MS 13).

Also called the "Osborn Commonplace Book" and the "Braye Lute Book," this late sixteenth-century miscellany of fifty-seven leaves has been of particular interest for the music it preserves for the lute. In addition, this small quarto volume contains various written items, including recipes and about a dozen poems. One of these is a version of Dunbar's "In a Secret Place" (Poem 72).

## *Introduction*

### **The Presentation of the Texts**

Modern conventions for punctuation and capitalization have been followed in presenting the texts of Dunbar's poems. The early witnesses contain many abbreviations that have been silently expanded. The refrains in the texts of many of the poems, which are often abbreviated after the initial stanza, are printed in full. In a small number of instances, the spelling conventions of the original texts have been altered for the convenience of the modern reader with the assumption that the revised spelling reflects the original pronunciation of the word more accurately than the orthographic convention of the day:

- 1) *a/v*: *obseruance* is here printed as *observance*; *spouer* is printed as *savour*.
- 2) *wi/wv*: *hewinlie* is here printed as *bevinlie*; *wt lewitt* is printed as *an lewitt*.
- 3) *ȝj*: *Jugis* is here printed as *yugis*; *Judas* is printed as *Judas*.
- 4) The only archaic letter that regularly appears in the early witnesses is yogh; it is here printed as *y* or *g* in most instances, though in a few instances as *ȝ*, as in *Lazarus*.
- 5) In several of the poems there are personified figures such as "Trewth" or "Honour." They have been treated as proper names and thus capitalized.
- 6) The second person familiar pronoun is here printed as *ther /þe/* in order to distinguish it from the article *the*, which was pronounced /þə/.
- 7) Titles: Medieval lyrics rarely possess titles, and the titles by which we may know them are more often than not the creations of modern editors. The same is true for the poems of William Dunbar. Many of Dunbar's poems, however, are widely known by their various popular titles — e.g., "The Lament for the Makars," *The Golden Targe*, and "The Thistle and the Rose" — titles which for the most part were given to the poems by Dunbar's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editors. Because these titles have been in common usage for some time, there is value in preserving them. The "titles" of Dunbar's poems given here attempt to follow such current practice, but also provided in brackets for some poems is a secondary set of titles that might include other familiar titles or briefly descriptive titles (such as refrains) that may make it easier for users of this volume to identify particular poems. An index of first lines is provided in the back of the volume for additional ease of cross-referencing.

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## *The Works of William Dunbar*

### I. On the Nativity of Christ

[*Et nobis puer natus est*]

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
|    | <i>Rorate, celi, desuper!</i><br>Hevins distill your balmy schouris,<br>For now is rissin the brycht day ster<br>Fro the ros Mary, flour of flouris.            | <i>Drop down dew, you heavens, from above</i><br><i>heavens let fall; fragrant showers</i>   |
| 5  | The cleir sone quhorne no clad devouris,<br>Summing Phabus in the est<br>Is camin of His hevinly touris;<br><i>Et nobis puer natus est.</i>                     | <i>rose; flower</i><br><i>saviour whom no cloud</i><br><i>Surpassing</i><br><i>from; tower</i><br><i>And for us a boy was born</i> |
| 10 | Archangellis, angellis, and domprationis,<br>Troeis, potestatis, and marteiris seit,<br>And all ye hevinly operationis,<br>Ster, planeit, firmament, and speir, | <i>dominations</i><br><i>Thrones, powers, martyrs many</i>   |
| 15 | Fyne, erd, air, and watter cleir,<br>To Him gife loving, most and lest,<br>That come into so meik manair;<br><i>Et nobis puer natus est.</i>                    | <i>sphere</i><br><i>earth</i><br><i>the greatest and the least (i.e., everyone)</i><br><i>(He) who has come; meik</i>              |
| 20 | Synmaris be glaid and pennance do,<br>And thank your Makar hairtfully,<br>For He that ye mycht nocte cum to,<br>To yow is cumin full humly.                     | <i>sinners</i><br><i>full-heartedly</i><br><i>not</i><br><i>humbly</i>   |
| 25 | Your saulis with His blud to by,<br>And losus yow of the feindis arrest,<br>And only of His awin mercy;   | <i>buy</i><br><i>free; fiend's</i><br><i>own</i>   |
|    | <i>Pro nobis puer natus est.</i>  | <i>For us ...</i>  |
|    | All clergy do to him inclyne,<br>And bow unto that barne bemyng.<br>And do your observance devyne   | <i>learned people</i><br><i>child gracious</i>   |

*The Works of William Dunbar*

	To Him that is of kingis King;		
	Essence His altar, reid and sing		<i>read</i>
30	In haly kirk, with mynd degest,		<i>holy church; sober</i>
	Him honouring attour all thing,		<i>above</i>
	<i>Qui nobis puer natus est.</i>		<i>Who ...</i>
	Celestiall fowlis in the are,		<i>birds; air</i>
	Sing with your nottis upoun hicht:		<i>notes; high</i>
35	In firthis and in foeresis fair		<i>wood</i>
	Be myrthfull now at all your mycht,		<i>joyful now with</i>
	For passit is your dally nyght.		<i>dimmal night</i>
	Aurora hes the claddin perst,		<i>Daybreak; clouds pierced</i>
	The son is rissin with glaidsum lycht,		<i>joyful</i>
40	<i>Et nobis puer natus est.</i>		
	Now spring up, flouris, fra the rute,		<i>root</i>
	Revert yow upward naturaly,		
	In honour of the blissit frute		<i>fruit</i>
	That rais up fro the rose Mary.		<i>arose</i>
45	Lay out your levis lustely,		<i>Spread; leaves</i>
	Fro deid tak lyfe now at the best		<i>death; last</i>
	In witschip of that Prince wirthly,		<i>worthy</i>
	<i>Qui nobis puer natus est.</i>		
	Syng, hevin imperiall, most of hicht,		<i>height</i>
50	Regions of air mak armosity;		
	All fische in fluid and foul of flicht		<i>fishes; flood; fowl; flight</i>
	Be myrthfull and mak melody.		
	All Gloria in excelsis cry —		<i>Glory in the highest</i>
	Hevin, erd, se, man, bird, and best —		<i>earth, sea; human</i>
55	He that is crowetit above the sky		<i>above</i>
	<i>Pro nobis puer natus est.</i>		

**2. Of the Passion of Christ**

Among thir freris, within ane cloister,		<i>these friars</i>
I enterit in ane oritorie,		
And knelit down with ane Pater Noster		<i>Our Father</i>

Poem 2: Of the Passion of Christ

	Befoir the michtie King of Glorie.	mighty
5	Haveing His Passiouen in memorie;	
	Syn to His mother I did inclyne,	Then
	Hir halsing with aue gaudie flore;	hailing; rejoice in the flower (see note)
	And sodandrie I sleipit syn.	then
10	Methocht Judas with morry aue Jow	a Jow
	Tuk blisst Jesu, our Salvatoer.	Savior
	And schot Him earth with morry aue schow,	buried; shew
	With schamefull wourdis of dishonour,	
	And lyk aue theif or aue tratour	
	Thay leid that hevinlie Prince most hic	led; high
15	With manassing attour messour,	menacing beyond measure
	O mankynd, for the lauf of thee.	lose
	Falsic condamnit befoir aue juge	condemned; judge
	Thay spirit in His visage fayr;	
	And as lyounis with awfall ruge,	bote: roaring
20	In yre thay hurlit Him heir and thair,	anger; violently threw; here
	And gaif Him mosy buffat sair	blows sore
	That it wes sorow for to se.	see
	Of all His claythis thay tirvit Him hair,	clothes; stripped
	O mankynd, for the lauf of thee.	
25	Thay terandis, to revenge their tein,	Those villains; anger
	For scorne thai cled Him into quhyt,	clothed; white
	And hid His blythfull glorious enc	eyes
	To se quaham angellis had delty;	see which
	Dispitoususle syn did Him smyt	Cruelly them; smite
30	Saying, "Gif sone of God Thow be,	If
	Quha strak Thee now, Thow tell us ty!"	Who struck; at once
	O mankynd, for the lauf of thee.	
	In tene thay tirvit Him agane,	pain; stripped
	And till aue pillar thai Him band;	to; bound
35	Quhill blude burst out at everie vane,	While
	Thay scorgit Him bayth flat and hand;	both foot
	At everie strak ran earth aue strand	walked; stream
	Quhilk mycht have ransonit woldis thre;	which; runneth

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- 40 He baid in stour quhill He mycht stand,  
O mankynd, for the laif of thee.  
*endured the conflict*
- Nist all in purpyr thay Him cled,  
And syne with thornis scharp and kewe  
His saikles blade agane thay sched,  
Pervng His heid with pykis grene;  
45 Unnesis with lyf He mycht sustene  
That crouse on thrangin with craeltie,  
Quhill flade of blade blindit His eue,  
O mankynd, for the laif of thee.  
*purple; clad  
then  
innocent; shed  
Piercing; thorns fresh  
Scarcely  
thrust on  
eyes*
- 50 Ane croce that wes bayth laege and lang  
To beir thay gaif this blissit Lord;  
Syn fullie, as theif to hang.  
Thay harlit Him furth with riap and corde;  
With bluid and swet was all deforde  
His face, the fad of angellis fre;  
55 His feit with stanis was revin and sconde,  
O mankynd, for the laif of thee.  
*A cross; both  
bear they gave  
Then finally; /as thief  
harled; rope  
swet; disfigured  
face; noble  
feet by stones; torn; cut*
- 60 Agane thay tirvit Him bak and syd,  
Als brim ax ony baris woid;  
The clayth that claiif to His cleir hyd  
Thay raf away with raggis made,  
Quhill fersly followit flesche and blude  
That it was pietie for to se.  
Na kynd of torment He ganestude,  
O mankynd, for the laif of thee.  
*stripped  
fierce; mad boars  
cloth; cleaved; bright skin  
tore; rips harsh  
While fiercely wear with it  
All varieties; willst thou*
- 65 On to the Crose of breid and leath  
To gar His lympnis langar wax,  
Thay straitit Him with all thair strenth,  
Quhill to the Rude thay garn Him rax,  
Syn tyit Him on with greit irne takis;  
70 And Him all nakin on the Tre  
Thay rassit on loft be houris sax,  
O mankynd, for the laif of thee.  
*breadth  
make; limbs grow longer (i.e., hyperextend)  
stratched; strength  
Rude (Cross); made; stretch  
Then tried; iron clasps  
at the sixth hour*

Poem 2: Of the Passion of Christ

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
|     | Quhen He was bendit so on breid,<br>Qwhill all His vanis brist and brak,  | stretched; in breadth<br><i>stones burst</i>   |
| 75  | To gat His cruell pase exceed<br>Thay leit Him fall down with ase swak<br>Qwhill cors and corps and all did crak.<br>Agane thay rasit Him on hie,<br>Reddic may tarmenis for to mak,  | make; pain increase<br>crash<br>flesh; body; crack<br>high<br><i>Ready</i>   |
| 80  | O maskynd, for the laif of thee.  |  |
|     | Betwix tuo theiffis the spreit He gaif<br>Onto the Fader most of micht.<br>The erde did trimmill, the statis claiſ,<br>The sone obscurit of his licht,<br>85 The day wox dark as ony nicht,<br>Deid bodies rais in the cite.<br>Goddis deir Sone all thus was dicht,<br>O maskynd, for the laif of thee.          | <i>Between two thieves; spirit; gave up</i><br><i>Unto; might</i><br>earth; tremble; stones split<br><i>sun</i><br>dark<br><i>Dead; rose</i><br><i>treated</i> |
| 90  | In weir that He wes yit on lyf,<br>Thay cane ase rude speir in His syde<br>And did His precious body ryff,<br>Qwhill blude and watter did furth glyde.<br>Thus Jesus with His woundis wyde  | fear; alive<br>rough<br>tear<br><i>While</i>   |
| 95  | As martir sufferit for to de<br>And tholit to be crucifyd,<br>O maskynd, for the laif of thee.  | <i>die</i><br><i>suffered</i>  |
| 100 | Methocht Compassion, vode of feiris,<br>Than straik at me with mony ase stound,<br>And soir Contrition, bathit in teiris,<br>My visage all in water downit;<br>105 And Reuth into my eir ay rounde.<br>"For schame, allace, behald, man, how<br>Beft is with mony ase bludy wound<br>Thy blissit Salvatour Jesu!" | mid of manners<br><i>Then struck; a wound</i><br><i>sore; bathed; tears</i><br>countenance<br>Pity; ear ever whispered<br><i>also</i><br><i>Blasphemy</i>      |
| 110 | Than raudlie come Rensensbrunce<br>Ay rugging me withoutin rest.<br>Qwhilk Crose and nalis, scharp scurge and lance   | <i>hurriedly comes</i><br><i>Ever pulling</i><br><i>Which Cross; nails</i>   |

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- 110 And blady crowne befoir me kest;  
Than Pane with passioan me opprest.  
And evir did Petie on me pow,  
Saying, "Behald how Jowis hes drest  
Thy blissit Salvatour, Chryst Jesu!"
- 115 With greting glad be than come Grace  
With woundis sweet saying to me,  
"Ordase for Him ase resting place,  
That is so werie wrocht for theo:  
The Lord within thir dayis thev  
Sall law undir thy lyntell bow;  
And in thy hous sall herbeit be  
Thy blissit Salvatour, Chryst Jesu."
- 120 Than swyth Conritisoun wes on stir,  
And did effir Confessious ryn;  
And Conscience me accusit heire  
And kest out moy cankerit syn;  
125 To rys Repentence did begin  
And out at the gentis did schow,  
Penance did walk the hous within,  
Byding our Salvatour, Chryst Jesu.
- 130 Grace become gyd and governour,  
To keip the hous in sicker stait  
Ay reddie till our Salvatour,  
Quhill that He come, air or lait;  
Repentence ay with cheikis wait  
No pane nor pennence did eschew  
135 The hous within evir to dehant,  
Onlie for luif of sweet Jesu.
- 140 For grit terroure of Chrysdis deid  
The erde did trymfull quhair I lay,  
Quhairthrow I walkeit in that steid  
With speis halflingis in effray.  
Than wrayt I all without delay,  
Richt heire as I have schawis to yow,
- cast  
Pain  
Pity; pull  
*Jesu* *house* *treated*
- greeting  
words sweet  
Prepare  
wearied made  
these  
Shall low  
sheltered
- at once; in a stir  
run  
heavy  
cast; corrupting sin  
arise  
gates; above
- Awaiting
- guide  
a secure condition  
ready for  
When; early or late  
cheeks wet  
avoid  
(i.e., the road); defend  
Only
- great; dark  
earth trembled where  
Through which I awakened; place  
spirit creatures; alone  
wrote; everything  
shows

*Poem 3: On the Resurrection of Christ*

Quhat me befell on God Fryday  
Befoir the Crose of swet Jess.

What

**3. On the Resurrection of Christ**  
[*Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro*]

Done is a battell on the dragon blak,  
Our campious Chrest confountit hes his force;  
The getis of Hell ar brokin with a crak,  
The signe triomphall rausit is of the Croce,  
5 The devillis trymwillis with hidous voce,  
The saulis ar borrowit and to the blis can go,  
Chrest with His blad our ransomis deis indece.  
*Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro.*

*The Lord has arisen from the grave (Luke 24:34)*

champion; bat  
gates  
raised; Cross  
devils trouble; hideous voices  
redeemed  
has repaid

10 Dungin is the deidly dragon Lucifer,  
The crewall serpent with the mortall stang,  
The auld lone tegir with his teith on char,  
Quhilk in a wait hes lyne for us so lang,  
Thinking to grip us in his clowis strang;  
15 The merciful Lord wald nocht that it wer so,  
He maid him for to felye of that fang:  
*Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro.*

Defeated  
fierce tiger; teeth ajar (i.e., bared)  
Who has lain in wait (ambush)  
claws  
did not wish  
covered him to fail; prey

He for our sake that sufferit to be slanc,  
And lyk a lamb in sacrifice wes dicht,  
Is lyk a lyone rissin up agane,  
20 And as a gyane raxit Him on hicht;  
Speangin is Aurora, radius and bricht,  
On lefft is gone the gloriis Appollo,  
The blisfull day departit fro the nycht:  
*Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro.*

sake  
prepared  
now  
giant raised Himself aloft  
Dawn, radiance  
Aloft has; Sun  
has been separated from

25 The geit Victour agane is rissin on hicht  
That for our querell to the deth wes woundit;  
The sone that wes all paill now schynis bricht,  
And dirkes clerit, our fayth is now refoundit.  
The knell of mercy fra the hevin is soundit.

great; again; high  
sue  
has cleared; re-established

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30	The Cristin ar deliverit of thair wo, The Jewis and thair errour ar confoundit: <i>Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro.</i>	Christians Jews
35	The fo is chasit, the battell is done oer, The presone brokin, the jewellouris flet and flemnit; The weir is gon, confermit is the peis, The fetteris lowisit and the dungeoun temnit, The ransom maid, the presonaris redemit, The feild is win, ourcamis is the fo, Dispolit of the tresur that he yemnit: <i>Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro.</i>	foe is put to flight; over prison; jailers fled; banished war; over; peace loosened; emptied ransom made; redeemed field is won; overcome Despoiled; guarded
40		

4. A Ballad of Our Lady  
[*Ave Maria, gracia plena*]

	Haile, sterne suprene, haile in eterne, In Godis sicht to schyne! Lucerne in dense for to discerne Be glory and grace devyne;	Haile, heavenly star; eternity God's sight Lantern; darkness to be seen Through
5	Hodiern, modern, sempitern, Angelical regyne! Our tern infene for to dispere, Helpe, rialest rosyne. <i>Ave Maria, gracia plena!</i>	Today; now; <i>and</i> forever queen eternal darkness; disperse most royal rose <i>Hail Mary, full of grace</i>
10	Haile, fresche floure fentynye! Verne us gobeme, virgin matern, Of resth baith rate and ryne.	Swiftly guide us; maternal pity (truth) both root; road
15	Haile, ylryng, benyng, fresche flurising! Haile, Alphais habitakle! Thy dyng offspring maid us to syng Befor His tabernakle.	young; gentle; flourishing Alpha's (God's) habitation worthy; made
20	All thing maling we douse thring Be vicht of His signakle, Qahilk King us bring unto His ryng Fro dethis dikk umbrakle. <i>Ave Maria, gracia plena!</i>	malign; throw By: sign (i.e., the Cross) kingdom death's shadowy place

Poem 4: A Ballad of Our Lady

	Haile, moder and maide but makle! Bricht syng, gladyng our languissing Be micht of thi mirakle.	without stede sign, making glad by (the) power
25	Haile, bricht be sicht in Hevyn on hicht! Haile, day sterne orientale! Our licht most richt in clad of nyght Our darknes for to scale.	by sight: high star in the east scatter string
30	Hale, wicht in ficht, psumar to flicht Of fendis in battale! Haile, plicht but sicht! Hale, mekle of mycht! Haile, glorias Virgin, hale!	anchor unvan; great
35	Ave Maria, gracia plena! Haile, gentill nyghtingale! Way stricht, cler dicht, to wilosome wicht That irke bene in travale.	nightingale straight; prepared; erring ones weary are
	Haile, qwene serene! Hale, most amene! Haile, hevinlie hie emprys! Haile, schene unseyne with carnale eynd!	pleasant high fair [one] unseen with physical eyes
40	Haile, ros of Paradys! Haile, cleve bedene ay till coneyne! Haile, fair fresche flour delyee! Haile, grene daseyne! Hale, fro the splene, Of Jhesu genitrice!	pure complete; continue fleur-de-lis living dairy: from the heart mother
45	Ave Maria, gracia plena! Thow baite the Prince of Prys; Our teyne to meyne and ga betweyne As humile oratrice.	gave birth to; Great Wrath pain, relieve humble intercessor
	Haile, more decore than of before, And sweter be sic sevyne, Our glore forlore for to restore Sen thow art qwene of Hevyn! Memore of sore, stern in auore,	beautiful sweeter by seven times lost Since Reminder; pain, star; [the] down
50	Lovit with angellis stevyne; Implore, adore, thow indeflore, To mak our oddis evyne. Ave Maria, gracia plena!	voice pray; undefiled oddi even
55		

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	With lovingis lowde elevyn.	praises loud eleven
60	Quhill store and bore my youth devore, Thy name I sall ay nevyne.	While pains; age; devote always name (declare)
	Empryce of peys, imperatrice, Bricht polist precious stase;	Emprise; imperatrix stone
	Victrice of vyce, hic genitrice Of Jhesu, Lord Soverayne.	Victress; high mother
65	Our wys payys fro enemys Agane the Feyndis trayne;	wise shield <i>Against the Fiend's deceit</i>
	Oratrice, mediatrice, salvatrice, To God gret suffragane!	Intervenor; savior helper
	Ave Maria, gracia plena!	
70	Haille, sterne meridiane! Spyce, flour delice of Paradys	middle fleur-de-lis
	That baire the gloriyn grayne.	carried; seed
	Imperiall wall, place palestrall,	palatial
	Of peirles pulcritud:	peerless beauty
75	Teyumphale hall, hic thron regall Of Godis celitud;	throne
	Hospitall riall, the Lord of all Thy closet did include;	majesty
	Bricht hall cristall, nos virginall.	Royal hospice
80	Fulfillit of angell fude. Ave Maria, gracia plena!	enclose
	Thy birth has with His blude	Filled with; food
	Fra fall mortal originall	
	Us rausound on the Rude.	ransomed; Cross

**5. In Praise of Women**

	Now of women this I say for me,	earthly; none
	Of earthly thingis name may bettie be.	
	Thay suld haif wirscep and grit honoring	should; worship; great
	Of men aboif all uthir earthly thing.	<i>From; above all other</i>
5	Rycht grit dishonour upoun himself he takkis	<i>takes</i>
	In word or deid quhaevir wemen takkis,	<i>deed whoever; disparages</i>

Poem 6: *The Manner of Going to Confession*

Sen that of wemen cumin all at we;	Since; come (born)
Wemen ar wemen and sa will end and de.	die
Wo wirth the fruct wald put the tre to nocth.	At beside
10 And wo wirth him ryght so that sayis oche	anything (right)
Of womanheid that may be ony lak,	womanliness; lack
Or sic grit schame upone him for to tak.	such
Thay us consaif with pane, and be thame fed	conceive; by
Within thair breistis thair we be bout to bed;	breasts where; are
15 Grit pane and wo and marnyng mervellus	pain; sorrow
Into thair birth thay suffir sair for us;	de; child-bearing; greatly
Than meit and drynk to feid us get we nane	food; feed; none
Bot that we sowlk out of thair breistis base.	what; neck; bone
Thay ar the confort that we all haif heit —	have here
20 Thair may no man be till us half so deir;	There; to; dear
Thay ar our verry nest of nurissing.	true; nurturing
In lak of thame qaha can say ony thing.	Name; who does
That fowl his nest he fylis, and for thy	bind; foul; therefore
Exylit he suld be of all gad company;	Exiled
25 Thair suld na wyis man gif audience	wise; know (lit., give audience)
To sic aue without intelligence.	such a one
Chryst to His fader He had nocth aue man;	not a
Se quhat wirscep wemen suld haif than.	See what; then
That Sone is Lord, that Sone is King of Kings,	
30 In Hevin and erth His majestie ay ringis.	Since; holiness
Sen scho bes borne Him in bir halines,	{the} well; foundation; goodness
And He is well and grand of all godnes,	
All wemen of us suld haif honoring,	above
Service and lufe, aboif all uthir thing.	

6. *The Manner of Going to Confession*

O synfull man, thir at the fourty dayis	these are
That every man sulde wilfull pessence dre.	should; endure
Oure Lorde Ihesu, as haly wrtit sayis,	holy
Fastit Himeself, oure exampill to be.	Fasted
5 Sen sic aue mychty king and lorde as He	Since such a
To fast and pray was so obedient,	should
We synfull folk sulde be more deligent.	

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- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
|    | I Reid thee, man, of thi transgressioune,<br>With all thi bert that thou be penitent.  | advise<br>heart   |
| 10 | Thow schrife thee cleane and mak confessioune,<br>And se thairto that thou be deligent,<br>With all thi synnes into thi mynde presensie,<br>That every syn be theselfe be schawin,<br>To thyne confessour it ma be kend and knawin.  | see<br><br>by yourself/be shown<br>may be acknowledged  |
| 15 | Apon thi body gif thou bes are wounde<br>That caussis thee gret painis for to feill,<br>Thair is no leiche ma mak thee haill and sounde<br>Quhill it be sene and clengit every deill;<br>Ryght sua thi schrift, bot it be schawin weill,   | if; have any<br>feel<br>doctor /who/ may; healthy<br>Until; seen; cleansed; bit<br>Likewise; confession; intent; revealed<br>able |
| 20 | Thow art not abill remissioune for to get<br>Witandise, and thou are syn forget.   | Consciously, if; any  |
| 25 | Of twenty wondis and are be left unhelit,<br>Quhat avalis the leiching of the laif?<br>Ryght sua thi schrift, and thair be oucht conselit,<br>It avalis not thi sely saule to saif,<br>Nor yit of God remissioune for to have.   | wounds if one; unhealed<br>What avails; curing; rest<br>Likewise; if; anything concealed<br>blessed soul; save                    |
| 30 | Of syn gif thou wald have deliverance,<br>Thow sulde it tell with all the circumstance.<br>Se that thi confessour be wys and discreet,<br>Than can thee discharge of every doate and weir,<br>And power has of thi synnes compleit.  | if; would<br>should<br>Make sure; is<br>Then; doubt; fear<br>have   |
| 35 | Gif thou cannot schaw farth thi synnes perqueir,<br>And he be blinde and cannot at thee speir,<br>Thow ma ryght weill in thi mynde consyder<br>Than are blynde man is led farth be another.  | perfectly<br>spear (i.e., probe)<br>may<br>a; another   |
| 40 | And sa I halde that ye ar baith begylde:<br>He cannot speir nor thou cannot him tell<br>Quhen nor how thi conscience thou bes fyldie.<br>Thairfor I Reid that thou excuse thisell,<br>And type thi mynde how everything befell —<br>The tyme, the place, and how and in quhat wys,<br>Sa that thi confessoun ma thi synnes prycce. | hold; beguiled<br>ask<br>When; fouled (defiled)<br>thyself<br>search<br>fashion<br>may; account for                               |

Poem 7: *The Table of Confession*

	Avys thee weill or thou cum to the preist Of all thi synnes, and nameleis of the maist, That thai be reddy prentit in thi breist: Thow sulde not cum to schryfe thee in haist And sync sit douan abusit as ayc beiste: With humyfl hert and sad costrycious Thow sulde cum to thine confessioan.	<i>Innervigate yourself; before especially; greatest clearly; heart have thou; thoughtless; heart over</i>
45		
50	With thine awin mouth thi synnes thou sulde tell; Bot sit and heire the preist hes not ado. Quha kenesse thi synnes better na thyselv? Thairfor I Reid thee, tak gade tent thairtoe: Thow knawis best quhair bindis thee thi scho;	<i>bear [so that] the priest has no difficulty Who knows; than yourself advise; heed where pinches; shoe before; there show; one and all</i>
55	Thairfor be wys afor or thou thair eur, That thou schaw furth thi synnes, all and sum.	
60	Quhair seldin compt is tane and hes a hevy charge. And syne is rekles in his governance And on his conscience he takis all to large, And on the end hes no remembrance —	<i>seldom reckoning; taken; burden there is careless too much or</i>
65	That man is abill to fall ayc gret mischance, The synfall man that all the yeir oursettis Fra Pasche to Pasche, rycht mony a thing forgettis.	<i>able; befall; misfortune neglect Easter</i>
70	I Reid thee, man, quhill thou art stark and young. With pith and strenght into thi yeris grene, Quhill thou art abill baith in mynde and young, Repente thee, man, and kepe thi conscience clen.	<i>advise; while; strong tongue</i>
	Till byde till age is mony perrell sene: Small merit is of synnes for to irke Quhen thou art ald and ma na wrangis wyke.	<i>To wait until; peril honour wrong deeds do</i>

7. *The Table of Confession*

To Thee, O marcifull Salvior myn, Jhesus,  
My King, my Lord, and my Redemer swet,  
Befor Thy blady figur dolorus  
I schryve me cleyne, with humile spreit and meike.

*sweet painful spirit; meek*

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- 5 That ever I did unto this hour compleit,  
Baith in word, in wark, and in entent.  
Falling on face full law befor Thy feit,  
I cry Thee marcy and laser to repeat.
- 10 To Thee, my meik saet Salvior, I me schrifte,  
And dois me in Thy marcy maist excelling,  
Of the wrang spending of my wittis fyve —  
In horing, seing, taiching, gusting, smelling —
- 15 Ganestanding, greving, offending, and rebelling  
Aganis my lord God omnipotent;  
With teris of sorrow fra myn eyc distelling,  
I cry Thee marcy and laser to repeat.
- 20 I, wrachit synnar, vile and full of vice,  
Of the sevin deidly synnis dois me schrif:  
Of prid, invy, of ire, and covatrice,  
Of lichory, gluttony, with sleath ay till ourdeife,<sup>1</sup>
- 25 Exercing vicis ever in all my life,  
For qahilk, allace, I servit to be schent.  
Rew on me, Jhesu, for Thy woundis five;  
I cry Thee marcy and laser to repeat.
- 30 I schrif me, Lord, that I abusit have  
The sevin deidis of marcy corporall:  
The hungry meit, nor thirsty drink I gaif,  
Veiyit the seik, nor redemit the thrall,
- 35 Herberit the wilsum, nor rakin cled at all,  
Nor yit the deid to bery take I tent.  
Thow that put marcy abone Thi werkis all,  
I cry Thee marcy and laser to repeat.
- In the sevin deidis of marcy spiritual:  
To the ignorant nocht gaif I my teching,  
Synneris correctionis, nor distituted consall,  
Nor unto wofull wrachis conforting.

*low; feet  
an opportunity (leisure)*

*sweet; confess*

*surpassing*

*five wits*

*hearing; tasting*

*Opposing; reviling*

*tears; eyes falling*

*wretched sinner*

*Practicing*

*als; deserve; punished*

*Take pity*

*neglected*

*deeds; physical*

*food; gave*

*Visited; sick; freed; captive*

*Sheltered; stranger; clothed the naked*

*dead; took; heed*

*above*

*I did not give*

*wretches*

<sup>1</sup> Of lichory, gluttony, with sleath aways to be overcome

Poem 7: *The Table of Confession*

	Nor unto saulis support of my preaching.	soul's
	Nor wes to ask forgevinnes pacient,	
	Nor to forgiſſ my nyctibusis offending:	neighbor's
40	I cry Thee mercy and laser to repent.	
	Lord, I have done full littill reverence	very little
	Unto the sacramentis sevin of gret renoun:	
	To that hie Eucarist moist of excellencie,	high Eucharist (i.e., Holy Communion)
	Baptasing, Penitence, and Confirmacion,	
45	Matremony, Ordour, and Extreme uncoun.	Ordination of this scars
	Heirof sa fer as I wes negligent,	
	'With hert contrit and teris falling doan,	
	I cry Thee mercy and laser to repent.	
	Thy ten commandmentis: a God for to honour,	of
50	Nocht tane in vane, na manlaar to be,	Not taken; murderer
	Fader and moder to worship at all hourie,	
	To be no theif, the haly day to upbie,	uphold
	Nyctibusis to luf, fals witnes for to fle,	flee
	To leif adultere, to covat no manis rent:	avoid
55	In all thir, Lord, culpabill knew I me.	these
	I cry Thee mercy and laser to repent.	
	In the twelf artickillis of the treuth: a God to trow —	in; believe
	The Fader that all wrocht and comprehendit,	made; created
	And in His only Sone, blissit Jhesu,	
60	Of Mary borne, on Croce deid, and discendit,	Cross died; descended
	The thrid day raiſ, to the Faderis ryght hand ascendit,	rose; right
	Of quik and ded to cum and hald jugement:	Dying; dead; hold
	Inte thir pointis, O Lord, quhare I have offendit,	Unto these
	I cry Thee mercy and lassere to repent.	
65	I trow into the blissit Haly Spreit,	I believe in: Spirit
	And in the Kirk, to do as it commandis,	
	And in the Day of Dome that we sall ris compleit	Judgment; rise complete
	And tak oure flesche agane, baith feit and handis,	
	All to be saif into the stait of grace that standis.	saved; state
70	Plane I revoik in thir quhair I mysument	Fully; repeat; these where

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- Befoir Thee, Juge and Lord of sey and landis:  
I cry Thee marcy and laser to repent. 160
- I synnit, Lord, nocht being strang as wall  
In hope, faith, and fervent cheritie.  
Nocht with the fair foare vertuis cardinall  
Agins vices sare ararryng me:  
With fortitud, prudenc, and temperanc, thir thre,  
With Justice ever in word, werk, and in entent:  
To Thee, Crist Jesu, casting up myn ee.  
I cry Thee marcy and laser to repent. 165
- In the sevin commandis of the Kirk, that is to say,  
Thy teind to pay, and cursing to eschew,  
To keipe the festuall and the fasting day,  
The Mes on Sonday, the parochie kirk persew,  
To proper curat to mak confessioun trew,  
Anis in the yer to tak the sacrament:  
Into thir pointis qhair I have offendit, sair I new.  
I cry Thee marcy and laser to repent. 170
- Of syn also into the Haly Spreit,  
Of schrift postponit, of syn agantis nature,  
Of incontricous, of confessour undiscreit,  
Of ressait syndall of my Salvior,  
Of undone pennence and satisfacioun sure,  
Of the sevin giftis the Haly Geist me sent,  
Of *Pater Noster* and sevin peticioun pure:  
I cry Thee marcy and laser to repent. 175
- Nocht thankand Thee of gratitud and grace  
That Thou me wrocht and bocht me with Thi ded;  
Of this schort tyme remembryng nocht the space,  
The Hevinnis blis, the Hellis hiddeous feid.  
But mor trespass, my synnis to terceid,  
Concluding never all thros myn entent,  
Quheis blud on Rude for me ran reid,  
I cry Thee marcy and laser to repent. 180

Poem 7: *The Table of Confession*

- 105 I know me vicius, Lord, and ryght culpabil  
 In aithis, swering, lessingis, and blasfemyng,  
 Of frusterat speiking in court, in kirk, in tabill,  
 In word, in will, in wantoses expremyng,  
 Prising myself and evill my nyctburis dertyng;  
 oaths; lying  
 neediness; or need  
 speaking  
 judging
- 110 And so in idilnes my dais I have myspent:  
 To Thee wes rent on Rude for my redeming,  
 I cry Thee marcy and laset to repent.  
 /why/ was
- I have synnit in discimilit thoschtis joly,  
 Up to the Hevin exallit in myn entencious  
 In hic exalxit arrogance and folly,  
 Imprudence, derisious, scorne, and vilipenciou,  
 Presumpcio, inobedience, and contempcio,  
 In fals vantglore and deidis negligent:  
 O Thow that deit for my redempcio,  
 I cry Thee marcy and laset to repent.  
 feigned  
 high  
 vilification  
 contempt  
 died
- I have synnit also in reif and in opprecious,  
 In wrangus gudis taking and posceding  
 Contra gud ressour, conscience, and discrecio,  
 In prodigall spending but reath of pure folkis neding,  
 In foule descepcio, in fals iuvenciois breedyn,  
 To conquer honour, tresour, land, or rent,  
 In fleschely lust abone messour exceeding:  
 I cry Thee marcy and laset to repent.  
 theft  
 wrongful goods; seizing  
 against  
 without pity on poor  
 deception; tales devising  
 gain  
 beyond moderation
- 125 Of mynd dissimilit, Lord, I me confes,  
 Of feid under ase freindlie continuance,  
 Of parciall jugging and pveryst wilfulnes,  
 Of flattering wordis for fleyng of substance,  
 Of fals seling for wtang deliverance  
 At Coursall, Sessious, and at Parliament:  
 130 Of everilk gilt and wicket governance  
 I cry Thee marcy and laset to repent.  
 deceitful  
 harbored; countenance  
 biased; perverse  
 gaining  
 attorney; decision  
 every 108
- I schrif me of all carsit cumpany  
 In all tyme witting and unwiting me;  
 Of cryminall caus and deid of felony,  
 known; unknown to me  
 deed

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- 140 Of ded or slauchter culpabill knew I me,  
Of tiranny, or vengabill cruelitie,  
In ony wise, deid, coursall, or consent:  
O deir Jhesu that for me deit on Tre,  
I cry Thee marcy and laser to repent.
- death; *murder blameworthy*  
*deid*  
*died*
- 145 Thoscht I have nocht Thi precius feit to kis  
As had the Magdalyn quhen scho did marcy craife,  
I sall, as scho, weipe teris for my mys,  
And every morrow seik Thee at Thi graife,  
That scis my hert; as Thou hir forgaife,
- not: first*  
*when: pray for*  
*shall: weep tears; sin*  
*grave*  
*says*
- 150 Thairfor forgife me as synner penitent.  
Thy precias body in honour I ressave;  
I cry Thee Marcy and laser to repent.
- receive*
- Thow mak me, Jhesu, unto Thee to remember.  
I ask Thy passioun in me so to abound
- 155 Quhill nocht in me unmannyt be a member,  
Bot fellin wo with Thee of every wound.  
At every straik mak throu my hart a stound  
That ever did strenye Thi fair flesche innocent,  
Sa at na part be of my body sound:
- Although; unjured*  
*feeling*  
*stroke: a pain*  
*stain*  
*So that no*
- 160 I cry Thee marcy and laser to repent.
- Of all thir synnis that I heir expesme,  
And bes foryet, to Thee, Lord, I me schriffe,  
Appelling fra Thy justice court extreme  
Unto Thi court of marcy exultive;
- these: express*  
*fathers if have forgotten; confess*  
*Appealing*
- 165 Theu mak my schip in blisst poit arrive  
That sailis heir in stormes violent,  
And saife me, Jhesu, for Thy woudis five:  
I cry Thee marcy and laser to repent.
- sails here*  
*savv*

**8. All Earthly Joy Returns to Pain**

Of Lenten in the first mornynge,  
Airly as did the day up spring.

*Lent*  
*Early*

Poem 8: All Earthly Joy Returns to Pain

- Thus sang aye bird with voice upplane:  
"All earthly joy returnis in pane." a: voice quite clear  
earthly; turns into pale
- 5     "O man, haif mynd that thou mon pas;  
Rememberit that thou art bot aye  
And sail in aye return agane;  
All earthly joy returnis in pane." must pass on  
ask  
shall to ask
- 10    "Haif mynd that eild ay followis yowth;  
Deth followis lyfe with gaipand mowth,  
Devoring fruct and flowering grane;  
All earthly joy returnis in pane." have; old age always  
gaping  
fruit; grain
- 15    "Welth, worldly gloir, and riche array  
At all bot thornis laid in thy way,  
Ourcovered with flouris laid in aye tranc;  
All earthly joy returnis in pane." glory  
Covered over; as a trap
- 20    "Come nevir yit May so fresche and grene  
Bot Januar come als wod and kene;  
Wes nevir sic drowth bot anis come rane:  
All earthly joy returnis in pane." [just] as wild; sharp  
such a drought; once [faggot]; rain
- 25    "Evirmair unto this worldis joy  
As nerrest air succedis noy;  
Thairfoir, quhen joy ma nocht remane,  
His verry air succidis pane." closest heir follows distress  
when; may not remain  
true heir
- 30    "Heir heith returnis in seiknes,  
And mirth returnis in havines,  
Toun in desert, forest in plane;  
All earthly joy returnis in pane." Here; turns into  
heaviness  
into; plain
- 35    "Fredome returnis in wrechtnes,  
And trewth returnis in dowbilnes  
With ferycit wordis to mak men fane;  
All earthly joy returnis in pane." Generosity turns into poverty  
duplicity  
pretended words; glad

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- "Vertew returnis into vye,  
And honour into aavyce;  
With curatye is conciess slave:  
All edly joy returnis in pane." corruption
- "Sen erly joy abydo nevir,  
Wirk for the joy that lexis evir;  
For uder joy is all bot vane:  
All erly joy returnis in pane." Since; is impermanent  
lasts forever  
other

**9. Of Man's Mortality**

[*Quod tu in cinerem revertis*]

- Memento, homo, quod cibis es:*  
Think, man, thou art bot erd and as;  
Lang heir to dwell nathing thou pres,  
For as thou coese sa sall thou pas.  
5 Lyk as ane schaddow in ane glas.  
Hyne glydis all thy tyme that heir is;  
Think, thocht thy bodye ware of bras,  
*Quod tu in cinerem revertis.* Remember, man, that you are ashes  
but earth and ash  
here; avail  
so shall you pass  
a mirror  
away glides  
though; were made  
That you will return to ash
- Worthye Hector and Hercules,  
10 Forcye Achill and strong Sampson,  
Alexander of grit nobilnes,  
Meik David and fair Absolone Powerful  
Hes playit thair pairis, and all are gone  
At will of God that all thing steiris:  
15 Think, man, exception thair is none,  
*Sed tu in cinerem revertis.* Modest  
Have  
things guides  
there  
But you will return to ash
- Thocht now thou be maist glaid of their,  
Fairest and plesandest of port,  
Vit may thou be within ane yeir  
20 Ane ussun, uglye tramort. Though  
demeanor  
And sen thou knawis thy tyme is schoot  
And in all house thy lyfe in weir is, Loathsome; decaying corpse  
since  
doubt

Poem 10: An Orison

	Think, man, amang all uthir sport, <i>Quod tu in cinerem reverteris.</i>	pleasures
25	Thy lastye bewtē and thy youth Sall feid as dois the somer floris; Syne sall thee swallow with his mouth The dragone death that all devours. No castell sall thee kip, nor touris,	<i>fair beauty</i> <i>Shall fade</i> <i>Then</i> <i>sure</i>
30	Bet he sall seek thee with thy feiris. Thairfore remembir at all houris <i>Quod tu in cinerem reverteris.</i>	<i>But: companion</i>
35	Thocht all this world thow did possed, Nocht eftir death thow sall posses, Nor with thee tak bet thy gaid deid Quhen thow dois fro this world thee dres. So speid thee, man, and thee confes	<i>Thought: had possessed</i> <i>Nothing</i> <i>good deeds</i> <i>go</i> <i>hurry</i>
40	With humill hart and sober teiris. And sadlyc in thy hart inspees <i>Quod tu in cinerem reverteris.</i>	<i>tears</i> <i>soberly</i>
45	Thocht thow be taklit nevir so sure, Thow sall in deathis port arryve, Quhair nocht for tempest may indare Bet ferslye all to spiris dryve. Thy Ransonneur with woundis fyve	<i>Thought: rigged</i> <i>shall: death's</i> <i>Where nothing</i> <i>fiercely: fragments drive</i>
	Mak thy phycyte anker and thy steeris To hold thy saule with Him on lyve, <i>Cum tu in cinerem reverteris.</i>	<i>Maker; main anchor; rudder</i> <i>keep; in eternal life</i> <i>When you return to ashes</i>

10. An Orison

	Salviour, supposis my sensualitē Subject to syn hes maid my saule of sys. Sum spark of lycht and spiritualitē Walkynnis my witt, and resoun biddis me rys.	Savior, even if <i>Obedient to sin, made; at times</i> <i>Some; light</i> <i>Awakes my mind</i>
5	My corrupt conscience askis, clips, and cryis First grace, synce space for to amend my mys,	<i>corrupted: begs, grasps</i> <i>then time; sins</i>

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Substance with honour, doing none suppris,  
Freyndis, prosperit , heir peax, syne Hevynis blys.<sup>1</sup>

Wealth; born to no one

**11. Of the World's Vanity**  
[*Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas*]

O wreche, be war, this waird will wend thee fro,  
Quhilk hes begylit mony greit estait.  
Turne to thy freynd, beleif nocht in thy fo.  
Sen thou mon go, be gathing to thy gait;  
5  
Renaid in tyme and rew nocht all to lait;  
Provyd thy place, for thou away man pas  
Out of this vaill of trubill and dissait:  
*Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.*

wretch; turn *away* from you  
Which; beguiled; estates  
friend; believe not  
Since; must; preparing for; journey  
Renaid; repent not too late  
Provyd; abide; must pass  
vale of trouble; deceit  
*Family of vanity and all is vanity*

Walk furth, pilgrame, qshill thou hes dayis licht,  
10 Dres fra desert, draw to thy dwelling place;  
Speid home, for quhy anone cummis the nicht  
Quhilk dois thee follow with ane ythand chaise.  
Bend up thy saill and win thy port of grace.  
15 For and the deith ourtak thee in trespass,  
Than may thou say thir wourdis with "alace".  
*Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.*

Go; dwelling  
Hurry; because soon  
constant pursuit  
Draw  
of death; sin  
Then; these; "alas"

Heir nocht abydis, heir standis nothing stabill.  
This fals waird ay flitis to and fro:  
Now day up bricht, now ryght als blak as sabbil,  
20 Now eb, now flude, now freynd, now cruelle fo,  
Now glaid, now said, now weill, now into wo,  
Now cled in gold, dissolvit now in as.  
So dois this waird transitorie go:  
*Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.*

Here sought remains  
always wavers  
ebb; flood; friend  
sad  
clothed; ask

<sup>1</sup> Friends, prosperity, here peace, then Heaven's bliss

Poem 12: Of Life

12. Of Life

- Qwhat is this lyfe bot ase straucht way to deid,  
Qwhilk hes a tyme to pas and nane to duell,  
A slyding quheill us lento scik remeid,  
A fre chois gevin to Paradice or Hell,  
5 A pray to deid, quhorne vane is to repell,  
A schoirt torment for infinit glaidnes,  
Als schort ase joy for lestaad hevynes.

What: straight path; death

Whilk: go; none; stay  
turning wheel; seek a remedy

victim; death; who impossible

infinite

As short a joy; lasting grief

13. Of the Changes of Life

- I seek about this world unstabille  
To find a sentence convinabille,  
Bot I can nocht in all my wit  
Sa trew a sentence fynd of it,  
5 As say, it is dessaveabille.

seek  
meaning convincing

not; understanding

So

Except to say; untrustworthy

- For yesterday I did declair  
Qhow that the seasoun soft and fair  
Com in als fresche as pakc fedder;  
This day it stangis lyk aye edder,  
10 Concluding all in my contrair.

observe

How

Came; peacock feather

strong; older

Ending all to the contrary

- Yesterday fair up sprang the floris;  
This day thair ar all slane with schouris,  
And fowillis in Forrest that sang cleir  
Now walkis with a dreary cheir,  
15 Full caild ar baith thair beddis and boaris.

slain; showers (rain)

bright

dreary mood

cold; bawdry

- So next to symmet wynnir bene,  
Nixt after confort, cairis kene,  
Nixt dirk medrycht the mirthfull morrow,  
Nixt after joy aye cumis sorrow,  
20 So is this world and ay hes bene.

next; it

ever sharp

midnight; cheerful

always comes

always has been

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14. *The Lament for the Makars*

[*Timor mortis conturbat me*]

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| I that in heill wes and gladnes<br>Am trublit now with gret seiknes<br>And feblit with infermité:<br><i>Timor mortis conturbat me.</i>                                | heill<br>troubled; sickness<br>weakened<br><i>The fear of death distresses me</i> |
| 5      Our plesance heir is all vane glory.<br>This fale world is bot transitory,<br>The flesche is brukle, the Fend is sly:<br><i>Timor mortis conturbat me.</i>     | joy here<br>fragile; Fiend; sly<br><i>joy here</i>                                |
| 10     The stait of man dois change and vary,<br>Now sound, now seik, now blith, now sary,<br>Now dansand mery, now like to dee:<br><i>Timor mortis conturbat me.</i> | condition<br>sick; sad<br>dancing; die<br><i>condition</i>                        |
| 15     No stait in erd heir standis sickir,<br>As with the wynd wavis the wickir<br>Wavis this warldis vanitè:<br><i>Timor mortis conturbat me.</i>                   | on earth; secure<br>willow<br><i>on earth; secure</i>                             |
| 20     Onto the ded gois all estatis,<br>Princis, prelotis, and potestatis,<br>Baith riche and pur of al degré:<br><i>Timor mortis conturbat me.</i>                  | Unto death<br>rulers<br>poor; ranks<br><i>Unto death</i>                          |
| He takis the knyghtis into field<br>Anarmyt undir helme and scheild,<br>Victour he is at all melle:<br><i>Timor mortis conturbat me.</i>                              | knight; [the] field<br>Unarmed<br>conflict<br><i>knight; [the] field</i>          |
| 25     That strang unmercifull tyrant<br>Takis on the moderis beeist sowkand<br>The bab full of benignité:<br><i>Timor mortis conturbat me.</i>                       | tyrant<br>mother's; sucking<br>bab<br><i>tyrant</i>                               |

Poem 14: *The Lament for the Makars*

- He takis the campion in the stour,  
The capitane closit in the tour,  
The lady in bower full of bewte:  
*Timor mortis confundat me.*
- champion; battle  
enclosed; tower  
bower
- 30
- He sparis no lord for his piscence,  
Na clerk for his intelligence;  
His awfull strok may no man flee:  
*Timor mortis confundat me.*
- strongly  
Nor  
blow
- 35
- Art magicianis and astrologgis,  
Rethoris, logicianis, and theologgis,  
Thame helpis no conclusionis sle:  
*Timor mortis confundat me.*
- astrologers  
Rhetoricians  
wife
- 40
- In medycyne the most practicianis,  
Lechis, surgianis, and phisicianis,  
Thame self fra ded may not supplie:  
*Timor mortis confundat me.*
- best
- 45
- I se that makaris amang the laif  
Playis heir ther pageant, syne gois to graif;  
Sparit is nought ther faculte:  
*Timor mortis confundat me.*
- see; rest*  
*here; thin go; grave*
- 50
- He hes done petuously devour  
The noble Chaucer, of makaris flout,  
The monk of Bery, and Gower, all thre:  
*Timor mortis confundat me.*
- has sadly devoured*  
*the flower of poets*  
*Bury St. Edmunds (i.e., Lydford)*
- 55
- The god Syr Hew of Eglington,  
And eik Heryot and Wyntoun  
He hes tane out of this castré:  
*Timor mortis confundat me.*
- good  
also  
taken from
- That scorpion fell has done infek  
Maister Jobne Clerk and James Afflek  
Fra balat making and tridine:  
*Timor mortis confundat me.*
- cruel; poisoned  
balade; tragedy
- 60

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- Holland and Barbour he has berevit;  
Allace, that he nought with us levit  
Schir Mungo Lokert of the Le:  
*Tenor mortis conturbat me.*
- 65 Clerk of Traest eik he has tane  
That maid the arteris of Grawane;  
Schir Gilbert Hay endit has he:  
*Tenor mortis conturbat me.*
- He has Blind Harry and Sandy Trail  
70 Slaine with his schour of mortall hait,  
Quhilk Patrik Johnestous myght sought fle:  
*Tenor mortis conturbat me.*
- He has left Menseir his endite  
75 That did in haf so lifly write,  
So schort, so quyk, of sentence hie:  
*Tenor mortis conturbat me.*
- He has tane Roull of Aberdene  
80 And gentill Roull of Corstorphin —  
Two bettir fallowis did no man se:  
*Tenor mortis conturbat me.*
- In Dunfermelyne he has done rounce  
85 With Maister Robert Henrisoun.  
Schir John the Ros embrast has he:  
*Tenor mortis conturbat me.*
- And he has now tane, last of aw,  
90 Gud gentill Stobo and Quintyne Schaw,  
Of quham all wichtis has peté:  
*Tenor mortis conturbat me.*
- Gud Maister Walter Kennedy  
95 Is poym of dede lyis veraly —  
Gret reuth it wer that so suld be:  
*Tenor mortis conturbat me.*

taken away

Allac; left

made; adventures

shower

Which

ended; composing  
of love so lively

vivid; meaning high

new

had whispered speech

embraced

taken; all

whom; men; pity

On the brink of death truly lies

pity; should

Poem 15: A Meditation in Winter

- Sen he has all my brother tane,  
He will naught lat me lif alone;  
95 On forse I man his nyxt pray be:  
*Timor mortis confortat me.*
- Since; taken  
not let me live alone  
Perforce; must; next prey
- Sea for the ded remeid is none,  
Best is that we for dede dispone,  
Efir our dedi that lif may we:  
100 *Timor mortis confortat me.*
- Since; death remedy  
prepare  
death

15. A Meditation in Winter

- Into thir dirk and drublie dayis  
Quhone sabill all the hevin arrayis  
With mystic vapouris, chuddis, and skyis,  
Nature all eurage me derryis  
5 Of sangis, ballatis, and of playis.
- these dark; overcast  
When darkness; heaven  
clouds  
pleasure  
songs, poems
- Quhone that the mycht dois leathin houris  
With wind, with haill, and havy schouris,  
My dole spreit dois hark for schoir;  
My haire for langour dois forloir  
10 For laik of Symmer with his flouris.
- When; lengthen  
sad spirit; cover  
heart; sadness becomes forlorn  
luck; Summer
- I walk, I turne, sleep may I nocht,  
I vexit am with havy thocht.  
This world all ovr I cast about,  
And ay the mair I am in deut,  
15 The mair that I remeid have socht.
- not  
heavy  
thind  
remedy; sought
- I am assayit on everie syde.  
Despair sayis ay, "In tym provyde  
And get sumthing quhairon to leif,  
Or with grit trouble and mischeif  
20 Thow sal into this court abyd."
- assailed  
soon  
on which to live  
shall
- Than Patience sayis, "Be not agast;  
Hald Hoip and Treushe within thee fast.
- Keep Hope

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- 25 And lat Fortoun wirk furthe hir rage,  
Quhome that no rasoun may assuge  
Quhill that hir glas be run and past." *her desires*  
*Whom; reason; present*  
*Until; hourglass*
- 30 And Prudence in my eir sayis ay,  
"Why wald thou hold that will away?  
Or craif that thou may have no space,  
Thow tending to another place,  
A journay going everie day?" *nor*  
*Why would; hold that which*  
*crave; length of time*
- 35 And than sayis Age, "My freind, cum neir,  
And be not strange, I thee reueir:  
Cum, brodir, by the hand me tak.  
Remember thow hes compt to mak  
Of all thi tymne thow spendit heir." *there; Old Age*  
*alsof*  
*has [af] reckoning*  
*here*
- 40 Syne Deid castis upc his gettis wyd  
Saying, "Thir oppin sail thee abyd;  
Alheid that thow wer never sa stout,  
Undir this lyttall sail thow lowt —  
Thair is nane uther way besyde." *Then Death; gates wide*  
*These open; await*  
*Although; hold*  
*lowt; bow down*
- 45 For feir of this all day I drowp,  
No gold in kist nor wyne in cowp.  
No ladeis bewtie nor luiffis blys  
May lat me to remember this,  
How glaid that ever I dyne or sowp. *drown*  
*chest; cup*  
*lady's beauty; love's*  
*stop me from thinking*  
*However well; dine; sup*
- 50 Yit quhone the nycht begynnis to schort,  
It dois my spreit sum pain confort  
Of thocht oppresait with the schowris.  
Cum, Iustie Symmer, with thi floweris,  
That I may leif in sum disport. *when*  
*spord*  
*joyful*  
*live; enjoyment*

*16. None May Assure in This World*

Quhome to sail I complese my wo  
And kydh my kairis, on or mo? *To whom shall*  
*voice my cares; one; more*

Poem 16: None May Assurance in This World

	I knew nocht amang riche nor pure Qaha is my freynd, qaha is my fo, For in this world may none assure.	not; poor Who no one be certain
5	Lord, how sall I my dayis dispone? For long service rewarde is none, And schort my lyfe may heir indare, And lossit is my tyme bygone: 10 Into this world may none assure.	dispone (use)  here lost; gone by
15	Oft falsett rydis with ase nowt Qshen trewh gois on his fine about, And lak of spending dois him spur; Thus quhut to do I am in dount: Into this world may none assure,	Often falsehood rider; a retinue When; foot money; prod what; doubt
20	Nane heir bot riche men hes renous, And bot pure men ar plackit down, And nane bot just men tholis injure; Sa wit is blindit and resoun: Into this world may none assure.	here only only poor; pulled suffers That wit and reason are blind
25	Verew the court hes done dispys; Ane rebald to renoun dois ryis, And cairlis of nobillis hes the care, And humbardiis brukis the benefys; Into this world may none assure.	has scorned A rascal; rise peasants from; receive offices Laggards enjoy; benefits
30	All genteice and nobilité Ar passit out of he degré. On fredome is laid foifalhour; In princis is thair no pety: For in this world may none assure.	gentility high generosity; forfeiture princes is there no compassion
35	Is non so armis into plait That can fra truble him debait; May no man lang in welth indare For wo that evir lyis at the wait: Into this world may none assure.	in armor plate defend remain

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- Flattery weiris ase flarrit goun,  
And Falsett with the lordis dois roun.  
And Trewthe standis barrit at the dure,  
And exal is Honour of the toan:  
40 Into this world may none assure.
- Fra everilk mowth fair wurdis proceidis;  
In every hairet disceptious brcidis;  
Fra everylk e gois lukis demure,  
Bot fra the handis gois few god deidis:  
45 Into this world may none assure.
- Toungis now at maid of quylte qahaill bone,  
And hairtis ar maid of hard flynt stone,  
And eue ar maid of blew azure,  
And handis of adamant laith to dispone.  
50 Into this world may none assure.
- Yit hairet with hand and body all  
Mon anset Deth quhen he dois call  
To compt befoir the Juge future;  
Sen all ar dead or than de salt,  
55 Quha suld into this world assure?
- Nothing bot deth this schortly cravis,  
Quhair Fortoun evir as fo dissavis  
With freyndly amylingis of ane hure,  
Quhais fals behedatis as wind byne wavis;  
60 Into this world may none assure.
- O, quha soll weild the wtang possessioun,  
Or the gold gatherit with oppresioun,  
Quhen the angell blawis his bugill stare,  
Quhilk unrestorit helpis no confessioun?  
65 Into this world may none assure.
- Quhat help is thair in lordschippis sevin,  
Quhen na hous is bot Hell and Hevin,  
Palice of licht or Pitt obscure,
- wears; flared  
*Falsehood; whisper*  
*barred outside the door*  
*exiled; from*
- From every; words*  
*bred*  
*eye; looks inviting*  
*good deeds*
- Tongues; made; white whale*  
*hearts*  
*eyes are made; azure*  
*are unwilling; give away*
- Men answer*  
*make account*  
*Since; dead or else shall die*
- soon  
deceives  
where
- Whose; promises; over names*
- who shall bear; wrongful*  
*by*  
*bugle loud*  
*Which unreturned*

Poem 17: Best to Be Blithe

- Quhair youlis ar hard with horrible stevin?  
Where yells; heard; voices  
70 Into this world may none assure.
- Ubi ardentes anime,  
Semper dientes sunt, Ve Ve!*  
Sall cry "allace" that women thame bare,  
Shall; alas; them bare  
O quante sunt iste tenebre!  
Oh how great is that darkness!  
75 Into this world may none assure.
- Than quho soll wirk for warldis wrak  
worldly good  
Quhen flude and fyre soll our it frak,  
flood; over; sweep  
And frely fruster feild and fare  
destroy field; furrow  
With tempest kene and hiddous crak?  
crack of thunder  
80 Into this world may none assure.
- Lord, sen in tym sa sone to cum  
since; so  
*De terra surrectiorum sum,*  
*I shall rise from the earth*  
Rewarde me with non erly cure —  
*earthly office*  
*Tu regni do imperium:*  
*Grant me power of your kingdom*  
85 Into this world may non assure.

17. Best to Be Blithe

- Full oft I mus and hes in thoscht  
Quite often I ponder; have  
How this fals world is ay on flocht,  
always in flux  
Quhair nothing ferme is not degest;  
Where; firm; settled  
And quhen I haif my mynd all socht,  
have; searched  
5 For to be blyth me think it best.  
cheerful
- This world evir dois flicht and vary;  
fluster  
For toun sa fast hir quheill dois cary,  
wheel  
Na tym bot tume can it tak rest,  
For quhois fals change suld nose be sary;  
where; should  
10 For to be blyth me thynk it best.

<sup>1</sup> Lines 71–72: *Where burning souls / Are always crying, Woe Woe!*

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- Wald man considdir in mynd rycht weill,  
Or Fortoun on him turn hir quheill,  
That erly honour may nocht lese,  
His fall les panefull he sald feill;  
15 For to be blyth me think it best.
- Quha with this world dois warsill and stryfe,  
And dois his dayis in dolour dryfe,  
Thocht he in lordship be possest,  
He levis bot ane wrechit lyfe;  
20 For to be blyth me think it best.
- Of waeidis god and grit riches,  
Quhat fruct hes man but mirines?  
Thocht he this world had eist and west,  
All wer povertie but glaidnes;  
25 For to be blyth me thynk it best.
- Quho sald for tynsall drowp or de  
For thyng that is bot vanicie,  
Sen to the lyfe that evir dois lest  
Heir is bot twynkyng of ane ee?  
30 For to be blyth me think it best.
- Had I for waeidis unkyndnes  
In hairet tane ony havines,  
Or fro my plesans bene opprest,  
I had bene ded lang synce, dowlies;  
35 For to be blyth me think it best.
- How evir this waeid do change and vary,  
Lat us in hairet nevirmoir be sary,  
Bot evir be reddy and addrest  
To pas out of this frawdfull fary;  
40 For to be blyth me think it best.
- Would  
wheel  
earily; not last  
should feel
- Who; wrangle  
worry spend  
Though  
lives
- worldly goods; great  
fruit; without merriness  
without
- Who should; deprivation droop or die  
Since  
eye
- nakes  
since, doubtless
- nevermore; sorry  
prepared  
false vision

Poem 18: Of Content

18. Of Content

- Quho thinkis that he hes sufficence  
Of godis hes no indigence,  
Thocbt he have nowder land nor rent,  
Grit mycht nor hie magnificeunce,  
5 He hes anewch that is content.
- Who, has enough  
goods; shortage  
Thought; neither  
big  
enough
- Quho had all riches unto Ynd  
And wer not satefeit in mynd.  
With povertie I bald him schent —  
Of covatyce sic is the kynd.  
10 He hes anewch that is content.
- Who; India  
satisfied  
think him punished  
sack; nature
- Thairfor I pray yow, bredir deir,  
Not to delyt in daynesis seir;  
Thank God of it is to thee sent,  
And of it glaidlie mak god cheir.  
15 Anewch he hes that is content.
- brother  
blesses many  
for what is
- Defy the warld, feymeyit and fals,  
Withe gall in hart and haruyit hals;  
Qoha maist it servis maist soll repente;  
Of quha is subchettis sour is the sals.  
20 He hes anewch that is content.
- Reputable; deceitful; false  
bitterness; heart; honeyed throat  
Who must; shall  
whose second serving; since
- Giff thou bes mycht, be gentill and fre,  
And gif thou standis in povertie,  
Of thine awin will to it consent,  
And riches soll returne to thee.  
25 He hes anewch that is content.
- If; might; noble; generous  
own
- And ye and I, my bredit all,  
That in this lyfe bes londship small,  
Lat latigour not in us imprent;  
Gif we not clym, we tak no fall,  
30 He hes anewch that is content.
- If; brothers  
but little property  
misery; be imprinted  
If; climb

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- For quho in world moost covatas is  
In world is parast man, iwis,  
And moost nedly of his intent:  
For of all gadis nothing he has,  
That of nothing can be content.
- covetous  
poorest; indeed  
needly of mind  
Despite; *this* good
- 35.

**19. Without Gladness No Treasure Avails**

- Be mery, man, and tak nocht fer in mynd  
The wavering of this wretched vale of sorrow.  
To God be humble and to thi frend be kyind,  
And with thi nighbour glaidlie len and borow —  
5 His chance this ryght, it may be thine tomorrow.  
Be mery, man, for any aventure,  
For be wismen it has bene said afforow:  
Without glaidnes avalis no treasure.
- merry: *for in mind* (i.e., do not dwell on it)  
fluctuations  
bumble  
lend  
opportunity  
before  
avails
- Mak gude cheir of it God thee sendis,  
10 For warldis wrak but weillat nocht avalis;  
Nothing is thine sauf onlie that thou spendis —  
The remenant of all thou brakis with hali.  
Seik to solace quhen saidnes thee assalis;  
15 Thy lyfe in dolour ma nocht lang indure,  
Quharfor of confort set up all thi salis:  
Without glaidnes avalis no tressur.
- Enjoy: what  
worldly good without cheerfulness  
save only what  
possessions; misery  
delight  
sorrows may; survive  
Therefore; avail
- Follow pece, flic trabill and debair,  
With famous folkis hald thi company.  
Be cheritable and humble of estait,  
20 For warldis honour levis bot are cry.  
For truble in erd tak no malancholy.  
Be rich in patiens, gifte those in gadis be par,  
Quha levis mery, he levis nrichtely:  
25 Without glaidnes avalis no tressur.
- peace, *for conflict: argument*  
respected  
bumble  
lasts  
on earth  
goods; poor  
Who lives happily; mightily
- Thow seis the wretchedis set with sorrow and care  
To gaddir gadis all that liffis spacie;  
And quhen that baggis ar full that self ar bar
- tre; wretches  
their  
themselves are bare
- 25

Poem 20: His Own Enemy

- And of that riches bot the keping hes,  
Quthill uthiris cum to spend it that hes grace,  
30 Quhilk of the wyning no labour hed na cur.  
Tak thow example and spend with mirrines:  
Without glaidnes avalis no treasure.
- guarding have  
While others  
had nor concours
- 35 Thocht all the weak that qvir hed levand wicht  
War onlie thine, no mor thi part dois fall  
Bot met and clacht, and of the laif are sicht,  
Yet to the Juge thow soll mak compt of all.  
Ane takonyng richt curmisis of ase ragment small:  
Be just and joyus and do to none injur,  
And trewhall mak thee strang as ony wall:  
40 Without glaidnes avalis no treasure.
- Though; wealth; living person  
Was only; more; share; belong  
fond; clothing; rest a glimpse  
account  
A reckoning; short list

20. His Own Enemy

- He that hes gold and grit riches  
And may be into mirrynes,  
And dois glaidnes fra him expell  
And levis into wreichnes.  
5 He wirkis sorrow to himself.
- hat; great  
cheerfulness
- lives in  
brings; upon himself
- He that may be but start or stryfe  
And leif ase lusty plesand lyfe.  
And synge with mariage dois him mell  
And bindis him with ase wicket wylfe,  
10 He wirkis sorrow to himself.
- without quarrel  
lives a carefree pleasing  
show; marriage; himself involve  
in; wicked
- He that has for his awin genyie  
Ase plesand prop, but mark or menyie,  
And schattis synge at ase uncow schell,  
And is forlaorn with the fleis of Spenyie,  
15 He wirkis sorrow to himself.
- own arrow  
target, without flaw; blemish  
shoots them; unfamiliar target  
done in; fleas of Spain
- And he that with god lyfe and trewhal,  
But varians or uader slewth,  
Dois evirmair with ase maister dwell,
- Without discord or other vice

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- That nevir of him will haif no rewth,  
20 He warkis sorrow to himself.  
  
Now all this tyme lat us be mirry,  
And sett noct by this warld a chirry.  
Now quhill thair is gode wyse to sell,  
He that dois on dry bread wirry,  
25 I gif him to the Devill of Hell!  
  
**21. Spend Thine Own Goods**  
[*Thyne awin gode spend quhill thow hes space*]  
  
Man, sen thy lyfe is ay in weir,  
And deid is evir drawand neir,  
The tyme unicker and the place.  
Thyne awin gode spend quhill thow hes space.  
  
5 Gif it be thyne, thyself it usis;  
Gif it be noct, thee it refasis —  
Aneither of it the profficit hex:  
Thyne awin god spend quhill thow hes spais.  
  
Thow may today haif gode to spend  
10 And bestely to mornis fita it wend  
And leif aneather thy baggis to bras:  
Thyne awin god spend quhill thow hes space.  
  
Quhill thow hes space, se thow dispone  
15 That for thy geir, quhen thow art gone,  
No wicht aneuder slay nor chace:  
Thyne awin god spend quhill thow hes space.  
  
Sum all his dayis dryvis our in vane,  
Ay gadderand geir with sorrow and pane,  
And nevir is glaid at Yule nor Pais:  
20 Thyne awin god spend quhill thow hes space.
- om; have no pity  
value not; cherry  
while; good; buy  
does; bread gnaw  
give
- since; always in doubt  
death; drawing  
uncertain  
own good; while; (a) chance
- If  
*If it be not fesed*; it deserves you  
Another
- from (you) it goes  
leaves; money-bags to embrace
- While; time; see that you dispose  
goods; when  
person another; pursue
- Someone; spends in vain  
*Always gathering possessions*  
Easier

Poem 22: Of Covetise

	Syne cumis aneunder glaid of his sorrow, That for him prayit nowdir evin nor morrow. And fangis it all with mirrynais: Thyne awin gad spend quhill thow hes space.	Then comes another neither takes; cheerfulness
25	Sam grit gad gadderis and ay it spairis, And aftir him thair cumis yung airis That his auld thrift settis on aye es: Thyne awin gad spend quhill thow hes space.	savvy heirs ace
30	It is all thyne that thow heir spendis, And nocht all that on thee dependis, Bot his to spend it that hes grace: Thyne awin gad spend quhill thow hes spais.	/will/ spend not; those that the opportunity
35	Trest nocht aneuthir will do thee to It that thyself wald nevir do, For gif e thou dois, stronge is thy case: Thyne awin gad spend quhill thow hes space.	Trust not What; would if hard; situation
40	Lake how the bairne dois to the mader, And tak example be nane udder That it nocht aftir be thy case: Thyne awin gad spend quhill thow hes space.	Look; child; mother by none other not; case

22. Of Covetise

[And all for caus of covetise]

	Fredome, honour, and nobilnes, Meid, manheid, mirth, and gentilnes, Ar now in cowrt reput as vyce. And all for caus of covetise.	Generosity Reward, courage; gentility court considered because
5	All weifair, welth, and wartones Ar chengit into wretchednes, And play is sett at littill price, And all for caus of covetyce.	good cheer, well-being; playfulness misery delight

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- 10 Hawking, hunting, and swif hors ryning  
 At chengit all in wrangus wyntryng;  
 Thair is no play bot cartis and dyce,  
 And all for caus of covetyce.
- Hawking  
 changed: wrongful gaining  
 card; dice
- 15 Honorable booshaids ar all laid down.  
 Anc laid hes with him bot a loun  
 That leidis him ofir his devyce,  
 And all for caus of covetyce.
- decayed  
 lord; rascal  
 leads; design
- 20 In barghis, to landwart and to sic.  
 Quhair was plesour and grit plenty,  
 Vennesoun, wyld fowill, wyne, and spycie,  
 Ar now decayid thrach covetyce.
- cities; at sea (i.e., everywhere)  
 Where  
 Fenwick; fowl
- 25 Husbandis that grangis had full grete,  
 Cattell and corne to sell and etc.  
 Hes now no beist bot cattis and myce,  
 And all thrach caus of covetyce.
- Farmers who farm  
 beasts except  
 because
- 30 Honest yemen in every toun,  
 War wont to weir baith red and broun,  
 Ar now arrayit in raggis with lyce,  
 And all for caus of covetyce.
- yeman  
 Who used; wear; red
- 35 And laindis in silk harlis to the heill,  
 For quhilk thair tennents sald somer meill  
 And leivis on rots under the ryce,  
 And all for caus of covetyce.
- [shar] trails; heel  
 sold summer meal  
 Eve; root [from] under the bushes
- 40 Quha that dois deidis of petie  
 And leivis in pece and cheretie  
 Is haldin a fulc, and that full nyce,  
 And all for caus of covetyce.
- Who; dead; mercy  
 lives; peace  
 held; fool; stupid
- And quha can reive uthir menis rowmis  
 And upon poor men gadderis sowmis  
 Is now ane active man, and wyice,  
 And all for caus of covetyce.
- take; property  
 poor; collect accounts  
 wife

Poem 23: *Of Deeming*

Man, pleis thy Makar and be miety,  
And sett not by this world a chirry.  
Wirk for the place of Paradyce,  
For thairin ringis na covettyce.

please; Maker  
do not value; cherry  
reigns

23. *Of Deeming*

- Musing alone this hinder nicht  
Of mirry day quhen gone was licht.  
Within ainc garth undir a tre,  
I hard ainc voce that said on hicht,  
5 "May na man now undemit be.  
  
"For thocht I be ainc crownit king,  
Vit sall I not eschew deming.  
Sum callis me guid, sum sayis thai lie,  
Sum cravis of God to end my ring,  
10 So sall I not undemit be.  
  
"Be I ainc lord and not lord lyk,  
Than every pelour and purpsyk  
Sayis, 'Land war bettir warit on me.'  
Thocht he dow not to leid a tyk,  
15 Yit can he not lat deming be.  
  
"Be I ainc lady fresche and fair,  
With gentilmen makand repair,  
Than will they say, baith scho and he,  
That I am jaipit, lait and air.  
20 Thus sall I not undemit be.  
  
"Be I ainc courtman or ainc knyche,  
Honestly cled, that cumis me rich,  
Ainc prydfull man than call they me.  
Bet God send thame a widdye wicht  
25 That cannot lat sic demyng be.
- the other night  
garden  
bound; voice; high  
no; unjudged  
  
though  
avoid judgment  
good  
reign  
  
robber; pickpurse  
were; used  
Though: does nothing; control a puppy  
refrain from criticizing  
  
making visit  
deceived (jested), late and early  
  
as properly suits me  
then  
them; withy (i.e., ripe) strong  
neck

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- "Be I bot littill of stature,  
Thay call me catyve creature,  
And be I grit of quastetie,  
Thay call me monstrowis of nature.  
30 Thus can I not undemit be.
- [af] wretched  
great
- "And be I ornat in my speiche,  
Than Towsy sayis I am sa streiche,  
I speik not lyk thair hous menyeic.  
Supposis hir mowth misteris a leiche,  
35 Yit can I not undemit be.
- speech  
proper  
servants  
*Even if; requires; doctor*
- "Bot wist thir folkis that uthir demis  
How that thair sawis to uthir semis,  
Thair vicious wordis and vaniti.  
Thair tratling tangis that all furth temis,  
40 Sum tyme wald lat thair denying be.
- knew these; others judge  
sayings; seem  
chattering; empties
- "Wer nocht the mater wald grow mai  
To wirk vengeance on aue demair,  
But doest I wald cause many de  
And mony catif end in caire,  
45 Or sum tyme lat thair denising be.
- Were it not that  
judger  
Without [af] doubt; [no] die  
many [af] wrench  
(i.e., before they stopped their judging)
- "Gude James the Ferd, our nobill king,  
Quhen that he was of yeiris yng  
In sentens said full subillie,  
"Do weill, and sett not by denising.  
50 For no man sall undemit be."
- Fourish  
years young  
[af] statement  
do not be concerned with censure  
unjudged
- And so I sall, with Goddis grace,  
Keip His command into that case,  
Beseiking ay the Trinitie  
In hevin that I may haif aue place —  
55 For thair sall no man demit be.
- in; regard  
Beseiking

Poem 24: How Should I Conduct Myself

24. How Should I Conduct Myself

[Lord God, how should I governe me?]

How	should	I	rewill	me	or	in	quhat	wys	should;	rule	myself;	what	faction
I	wald	sum	wyse	man	wald	devys,			wish;	would	inform	me	
Sen	I	can	leif	in	no	degré			Since;	live	not	at	all
Bot	sum	my	mancris	will	dispyc:				Without	someone	deriding	my	manners
5	Lord	God,	how	ould	I	governe	me?						
Giff	I	be	lusty,	galland,	and	blythe,			If;	lusty;	cheerful		
Than	will	thai	say	on	me	full	swythe,			immediately			
"Yon	man,	out	of	his	mynd	is	he,						
Or	sum	hes	done	him	confort	kythe":							
10	Lord	God,	how	ould	I	governe	me?						
Giff	I	be	sorrowfall	and	sad,								
Than	will	thai	say	that	I	am	mad;						
I	do	bot	drowpe	as	I	wald	de,						
So	will	thai	deyme,	bayth	man	and	lad:						
15	Lord	God,	how	sall	I	governe	me?						
Giff	I	be	lustie	in	myne	array,							
Than	lufe	I	paramoris,	say	thai,								
Or	in	my	mynd	is	proud	and	he,						
Or	ellis	I	haif	it	sum	wrong	way:						
20	Lord	God,	how	sall	I	governe	me?						
And	gif	I	be	not	wel	besene,							
Than	twa	and	twa	sayis	thame	betwene,							
"Evill	gydit	is	yon	man,	paſſe	—							
Be	his	clothing	it	may	be	sene":							
25	Lord	God,	how	ould	I	governe	me?						
Gif	I	be	sene	in	court	our	lang.						
Than	will	thai	quhispir	thame	amang,								
My	freindis	at	not	werthe	ane	fle							
That	I	sa	lang	but	gverdon	gang:							
30	Lord	God,	how	ould	I	governe	me?						

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	In court reward gif purches I, Than have thai malice and ivy And sacrifice on me thai lie And dois me sklandir privaly:	<i>if I receive</i>
35	Lord God, how could I governe me?	
	How could my gyding be devysit? Giff I spend litle I am dispysit; Be I courtes, nobill, and fre, A prodigall man than am I pysisit	<i>conduct be prescribed</i>
40	Lord God, how could I governe me?	<i>considered</i>
	Sen all is jugit, bayth god and ill, And no mannis young I may had still, To do the best my mynd sal be. Lat everie man say quhat he will,	<i>Since everyone is judged</i>
45	The gracious God mot governe me.	<i>hold shall be must</i>

**25. Rule of Oneself**

[He rewlis weill that weill himself can gyd]

	To dwell in court, my freind, gifc that thow list, For gift of fortoun ivy thow no degni.	<i>(f. wish not at all)</i>
	Behold and heir, and lat thy tung tak rest —	<i>Watch; listen</i>
	In mekle speiche is paire of vanicie;	<i>much speech</i>
5	And for no malycce preis thee never to lie.	<i>force</i>
	Als trubill never thyself, sone, be no tyd	<i>Also; at no time</i>
	Uthairis to rewil that will not rewlist be:	<i>Others to govern</i>
	He rewlis weill that weill himself can gyd.	<i>well; guide</i>
	Be war quhorne to thy counsale thow discuse,	<i>wary to whom; disclose</i>
10	For trewth dwells noct ay for that trewth apperis.	
	Put not thyse honour into aventure —	<i>at risk</i>
	Ane freind may be thy fo, as fortoun steiris.	<i>goes</i>
	In company cheis honorable feiris,	<i>choose; companion</i>
	And fra vyle felkis draw thee fast on syd.	<i>away</i>

Poem 25: Rule of Oneself

- 15 The Psalme sayis, *Cum sancto sanctus eris:*<sup>1</sup>  
He rewlis weill that weill himself can gyd.
- Haif pacience thocht thou no lordship posseid,  
For hic vertew may stand in law estat.  
Be thou content, of mair thou hes no neid;
- 20 And be thou nocth, desyre soll mak debait  
Evirmoir, till Deth say to thee than "Chakonait"  
Thocht all war thyne this wold within so wyd,  
Qaha can resist the serpent of dispyt?
- He rewlis weill that weill himself can gyd.
- Here; though you; possess  
high; low  
more
- If you are not; strife  
Death says; than "Checkmate!"
- Though; were  
Who; animosity
- 25 Fle frome the fallowschip of sic as ar defamit,  
And fra all fals tungis fulfilld with flattery,  
Als fra all schrewis, or ellis thou art eschamit.  
Sic art thou callit as is thy company.
- 30 Fle parrellus tailis foundit of ivny.  
With wilfull raen, son, argown thou no tyd,  
Qahome no resone may seis nor pacify:  
He rewlis weill that weill himself can gyd.
- Flee; such; disgraced  
Also; will be shamed  
Such
- Flee pernicious tales based on  
argue; at no time  
Whom; stop
- 35 And be thou not ane roundar in the nake,  
For gif thou be, men will hald thee suspect.  
Be nocth in countenance ane skornar, nor by luke,  
Bot dowl sicklyk soll stryk theo in the neck.
- 40 Be war also to counsall or coreck  
Him that extold hes far himself in pryd,  
Qahair parrell is but proffit or effect:  
He rewlis weill that weill himself can gyd.
- whisperer; neck  
If  
not; face; look
- Without full doubt in such a way  
wary  
elevated
- Where peril; without worth
- 45 And sen thou seyis mory thingis varianz,  
With all thy hart treit bissines and cure.  
Hald God thy freind, evir stabill be Him stand;  
He will thee confort in all misaventur.
- 50 And be no wayis dispytfull to the peure,  
Nor to no man do wrang at ony tyd.
- since; sees; changing  
welcome diligence; responsibility  
firm by  
adversity
- not at all scornful; poor  
time

<sup>1</sup> "With the body, body you shall be" (Psalm 17:26 in the Vulgate)

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Quhoso dois this, sickir I yow assoure,  
He rewlis weill that sa weill him can gyd.

certainly

**26. Discretion in Asking**

[*In asking sould discretion be?*]

- Of every asking followis nocht  
Reward, bot gif sum caus war wrocht;  
And qahair caus is, men weill ma sie,  
And qahair name is, it wil be thocht:  
5 In asking sould discretion be.  
  
Ane fule, thocht he haif cause or name,  
Cryis ay, "Gif me," into a rane;  
And he that dromis ay as ane bee  
Sowld haif ane heitar dall as stane.  
10 In asking sould discretion be.  
  
Sum askis mair than he deservis,  
Sum askis far les than he servis,  
Sum schames to ask (as braids of me)  
And all without reward he stervis.  
15 In asking sould discretion be.  
  
To ask but service hurtis god fame,  
To ask for service is not to blame,  
To serve and leif in beggartie  
To man and maistir is baith schame.  
20 In asking sould discretion be.  
  
He that dois all his best servyis  
May spill it all with crakkis and cryis,  
Be fowl inopportunitie.  
Few wordis may serve the wyis.  
25 In asking sould discretion be.  
  
Nocht seidfull is men sould be dum,  
Nothing is gottin but wordis sum;

not  
unless; produced  
where; well may see  
none  
should

*A fool, though  
always; in a rane  
dromes (hurts)  
a hearer (listener)*

more  
are ashamed; as applies to me  
dies

*without (doing)*

*fame*

waste; boasts; shows  
By foul begging (importuning)  
wise

*should be silent  
without; some*

Poem 27: Discretion in Giving

	Nocht sped but diligence we se, For nathing it allane will cum.	speed
30	In asking sowld discretion be.  Asking wald haif convenient place, Convenient tyme, lasse, and space, But haist, or preis of grit menyie, But haist abasit, but young reckles.	resumes leisure <i>Without haste; press of great company</i> <i>heart dismayed; tongue careless</i>
35	In asking sowld discretion be.  Sum micht haif "Ye" with littill care, That hes off "Nay" with grit labour; All for that tyme not byd can he, He tynis baith cirand and honour.	effort  <i>want</i> <i>loses both errand; honor</i>
40	In asking sowld discretion be.  Suppois the servand be lang unquit, The lord sumtyme reward will it. Gife he dois not, quhat remedy? To fecht with Fortoun is no wit:	unrewarded  <i>(f: what</i> <i>fight; nor wise</i>
45	In asking sowld discretion be.	

27. Discretion in Giving

[In geving sowld discretion be]

	To speik of gift or almos deidis: Sum geviss for mercit and for meidis, Sum, worldly honour to upbie, Geviss to thame that nothing neidis.	almos deidis rewards exult needs
5	In geving sowld discretion be.	
	Sum geviss for pryd and glory vane, Sum geviss with grugeing and with pane, Sum geviss, in practik, for supplie, Sum geviss for twyis als god agane.	complaining; pain help twice as good
10	In geving sowld discretion be.	

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- Sum gevis for thank and sum for threit,  
Sum gevis money and sum gevis meat,  
Sum gevis woodis fair and sle,  
Giftis fra sum ma na man treit.  
15 In giving sowld discretiou be.
- Sum is for gift sa lang requyrd,  
Quhill that the crevar be so tynd  
That, or the gift deliverit be,  
The thank is frustat and expyrd.  
20 In geving sowld discretiou be.
- Sum gevis to littill full wretchitly,  
That his giftis ar not set by,  
And for a huidpyk haldin is he  
That all the wrold cryis on him, "Fy!"  
25 In giving sowld discretiou be.
- Sum in his geving is so large  
That all ourlaidin is his berge.  
Than vyce and prodigalit  
Thaitof his honour dois discharge.  
30 In giving sowld discretiou be.
- Sum to the riche gevis geir  
That nicht his giftis weill forbair;  
And thocht the peur for falt sowld de,  
His cry nocth enteris in his cir.  
35 In giving sowld discretiou be.
- Sum givis to strangeris with faces new,  
That yesterdai fra Flanderis flew,  
And to awld servandis list not se,  
War they nevir of sa grit vertew.  
40 In giving sowld discretiou be.
- Sum gevis to thame can ask and plesyie,  
Sum gevis to thame can fluttir and fenyie,  
Sum gevis to men of honestie

*discret  
food  
subtile  
may; outcast*

*petitioner  
before  
anxious*

*soo  
worth anything  
miser hold*

*free  
overladen; barge  
Then  
dissipate*

*good  
though; poor; Jack should die  
nor*

*resisted  
servants' wishes; see  
Were*

*complain  
fright*

Poem 28: *Discretion in Taking*

- 45 And haldis all janglaris at disdenye,  
In geving sowld discretioune be.  
  
Sam gettis giftis and riche arrayn,  
To sweir all that his maister sayis,  
Thocht all the contrair well knawis he —  
At mony sic now in thir dayis.  
50 In geving sowld discretioune be.  
  
Sam gevis godmen for thair thewis,  
Sam gevis to trumperis and to schrewis,  
Sam gevis to knaiffis awtoritie,  
Bot in thair office gode fundin few is.  
55 In geving sowld discretioune be.  
  
Sam givis parrochynnis fall wyd,  
Kirkis of Sanct Barnard and Sanct Bryd,  
To teiche, to rewill, and to oursie,  
That hes na wit thamselffe to gyd.  
60 In geving sowld discretioune be.

28. *Discretion in Taking*  
[In taking sowld discretioune be]

- Effir geving I speik of taking,  
Bot littill of ony god forsaking.  
Sum takkis our littill awtoritie,  
And sum our mekle, and that is glaiking.  
5 In taking sowld discretioune be.  
  
The clerkis takis beneficis with brawlis,  
Sum of Sanct Petir and sum of Sanct Pawlis.  
Tak he the rentis, no cair hes he,  
Supposis the divill tak all thair sawlis.  
10 In taking sowld discretioune be.  
  
Barrenis takis fra the tennentis peure  
All fruct that growis on the feare.

charvers in disdain

Though

(There) are many such; these

virtues

trifles; vanities

knave authority

parishes; wide

Churches

track; rule; oversee

guide

Some; too little authority

too much; folly

noisy disputes

Although; devil; souls

scanty poor

farow

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- 15 In mailis and gersomes rasiit ouirbie,  
And garris thame beg fra dur to dure.  
In taking sowld discretiou be.
- Sum takis uthir mens takkis  
And on the peire oppresioan makkis,  
And nevir remembirs that he mon die  
Quhill that the gallowis gar him rax.  
In taking sowld discretiou be.
- 20 Sum takis be sic and sum be land,  
And nevir fra taking can hold thair hand  
Quhill he be tit up to ane tre;  
And synē thay gar him understand  
In taking sowld discretiou be.
- 25 Sum wald tak all his ryckbouris geir.  
Had he of man als littill feir  
As he hes dreid that God him see.  
To tak than sowld he nevir forbeir.  
In taking sowld discretiou be.
- 30 Sum wald tak all this worldis breid,  
And yit not satisfiet of thair neid.  
Throw haire unsatiable and gredie.  
Sum wald tak littill and can not speid.  
In taking sowld discretiou be.
- 35 Geit men for taking and oppressioan  
Ar sett full famous at the Sessious,  
And peir takaris ar hangit hie,  
Schamit forevir and thair successioan.  
In taking sowld discretiou be.
- rents and fees raised too high  
make; doze  
other; goods  
must  
Ours; make; stretch  
*by sea*  
Unw. tied  
show; make  
good  
fear  
dread  
bread  
satisfy  
unsatiable; greedy  
thrive  
*Court of Justice*  
high  
Shamed; descendant

Poem 29: Dunbar at Oxford

29. *Dunbar at Oxford*

[*Ane peraloues seiknes is vane prosperite*]

To speik of science, craft, or sapience,	knowledge, skill, or wisdom
Of vertew, morall cannyng, or doctryne,	precepts; dogma
Of jure, of wisdoome, or intelligence,	law
Of every study, lair, or disciplyne —	subject
5 All is bot tynt or reddy for to tyne,	lost; be lost
Nocht using it as it shuld usit be,	Not; should
The craft excersing, considering nocht the fyne.	not; result
Ane peraloues seiknes is vane prosperite.	<i>A peraloues sickness; empty</i>
10 The curius probatcion logicall,	<i>subtle logical proof</i>
The eloquence of ornat rethorye,	rhetoric
The naturall science filosophaicall,	
The dark apirance of astronomy,	dark
15 The theologis sermon, the fablis of poetrye —	theologian's
Without guid lyff, all in the selfe dois de,	does die
15 As Mayis flouris dois in September drye.	
Ane peraloues lyff is vane prosperite.	
Quhairfoir, ye clerkes grytast of constance,	Wherefore; steadfastness
Fullest off science and of knaleging,	
To us be mirouris in yow governance,	
20 And in owt darknes be lampis in schining.	then; rain
Or thane is frustar is yowr lang lerning;	If; teachings; decide
Gyff to yowr sawis your deidis contrar be,	greatest; intelligence
Yowr maist accuarat is your awin curing.	
Ane peraloues seiknes is vane prosperite.	

30. *The Thistle and the Rose*

Quhen Merche wes with variaid windis past,	When March; varying
And Appyll had with his silver schouris	April; showers
Tane leif at Nature with ane orient blast,	Departed from; eastern
And lusty May, that muddir is of flouris,	joyful; mother
5 Had maid the birdis to begyn thair houris	made

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- Amung the tendir odours red and quhyt,  
Quhois armory to heire it wes delyt.
- In bed at morrow sleeping as I lay,  
Me thocht Aurora with her cristallene  
Is at the window lukit by the day  
And halsit me, with visage paill and grene,  
On quhois hand a lark sang fro the splene:  
"Awak, luvaris, out of your slomering;  
Se how the lusty morrow dois up spring!"
- 15 Me thocht fresche May befoir my bed upside  
In weid depaynt of mony divers hew,  
Sobir, benyng, and full of mansuetude,  
In brycht atteir of flouris forgit new,  
Hevintly of color, quhyt, red, broun, and blew,  
20 Balmitt in dew and gilt with Phobus berrys  
Quhill all the hous ihamynit of hir lemys.
- "Slugged," scho said, "Awak amnone, for schame,  
And in my honour sumthing thow go wryt;  
The lork hes done the stirry day proclame  
To raiis up luvaris with confort and delyt,  
Vit nocht increas thy curage to indyt,  
25 Quhois haire sumtyme hes glaid and blisfull bene  
Sangis to mak undir the levis grene."
- 30 "Quhairto," quod I, "Sall I apeys at morrow,  
For in this May few birdis herd I sing?  
Thai haif moir caus to weep and plane their sorrow,  
Thy air it is nocht holsum nor benyng;  
Lord Eolus dois in thy sessone ring;  
35 So basteorous ar the blastis of his horne,  
Amung thy bewis to walk I haif forborne."
- With that this lady soberly did smyll  
And said, "Upeys and do thy observance;  
Thow did promyt in Mayis lusty quhytle  
For to discryve the ros of most plesance,
- scents [of flowers] red and white  
Whose harmony; hear  
sleep  
greeted; pale; fresh  
whose; heart  
Awaken; lovers; slumbering  
See; merry
- raiment  
Calm, gracious; gentleness  
attire; newly formed  
white; red  
Anointed with; gilded; beams  
White; [was] illuminated by; rays
- Sluggard; Awake right away  
write  
lark  
lovers  
*[has] not increased; desire; compose*  
Whose heart  
Songs; leaves
- Why; Shall  
heard  
more; weep; express  
not wholesome; pleasant  
reign  
harsh are  
brought
- gentle  
promise; May's joyous time  
describe; rose; delight

Poem 30: *The Thistle and the Rose*

- 40 Go se the birdis how thay sing and dance,  
Illumynit our with orient skyis brycht  
Assamylit richely with new asar lycht."  
see  
fall over  
Adorned; blue
- Qwhen this wes said depairtit scho, this quene,  
And eserit in a lusty gairding gest.  
departed  
merry garden fine
- 45 And than, me thocht, sa listely besene  
In serk and mantill, fall haistely I went  
Into this garth, most daece and redolent  
Of herb and flour and tendir plantis sueit  
And grene levis doing of dew doan fleit.  
then; that well-arranged  
skirt; cloak  
gardeon; sweet  
sweet  
dripping; dropped
- 50 The purpour sone with tendir bennys reid  
In orient bricht as angell did appair,  
Throw goldin skyis putting up his heid,  
Quhois gilt tressis schone so wondir cleir  
That all the world take confort, fer and neir.  
purple sun  
Through; head  
Whose  
pink
- 55 To luke upone his fresche and blisfull face,  
Doing all sable fro the hevynnis chace.  
Chasing; darkness; heaven
- And as the blisfull sounce of cherarchy,  
The fowlis song throw confort of the licht;  
The birdis did with oppin vocis cry,  
just like; sound; [heavenly] hierarchies  
birds sang; light
- 60 "O luvaris fo, away thow dally nyght,  
And welcum day that confortis every wicht,  
Haill May, haill Flora, haill Aurora schene!  
Haill princes Natur, haill Venus luvis quene!"  
lovers' fore  
person  
princess; love's queen
- 65 Dame Nature gaif aye inhibitory thair  
To fers Neptunus and Eolus the bawld  
Nocht to perturb the wattir nor the air,  
And that no schouris scharp nor blastis cauld  
Effray suld flouris nor fowlis on the fold;  
gave; injunction  
fierce; bold  
Nor  
sharp; cold
- 70 Scho bad eik Juno, goddes of the sky,  
That scho the hevin suld keip amense and dry.  
alarm should; birds; earth  
bade also  
pleasant
- Scho ordasd eik that every bird and beist  
Befoir hir hienes suld amnone compeir,  
And every flour of vertew, most and leist,  
ordained also; beast  
highness should; appear  
virtue; least

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- 75 And every herb be feild, fer and neir,  
As thay had woot in May fro yeir to yeir  
To hit their makar to mak obedians,  
Full law inclynand with all dew reverens.
- 80 With that arsone scho send the swyfhe ro  
To being in beitis of all condicoun;  
The restles swallow commandit scho also  
To seche all fowl of small and greit renoune.  
And to gar flouris compeir of all fassoun,  
Full craftely conjurit scho the yarrow,  
Quhilk did firth swirk als swift as ony arrow.
- 85 All present wer in twynkling of ane e,  
Baith beist and bird and flour, befoir the quene.  
And fliest the lyone, gretast of degré,  
Was callid thair, and he most fair to sene,  
With a full hardy contenance and kene,  
90 Befoir Dame Natur come and did inclyne,  
With visage bawld and cutage leonynie.
- 95 This awfull beist full terrible wes of cheir,  
Persing of lake and stout of countenance,  
Rycht strong of corps, of fassoun fair but feir,  
Lusty of schaip, licht of deliverance,  
Reid of his culour as is the ruby glane;  
On feild of gold he stade full mychtely  
With flour delycis circulit lustely.
- 100 This lady liftit up his cluvis cleir,  
And leit him listly lene upon his kne;  
And crownit him with dyademe full deir,  
Of radyous stonis most ryall for to se,  
Saying, "The king of beitis mak I thee,  
105 And the chief protector in the woddis and schawis.  
Onto thi leidis go firth, and keip the lawis.
- "Exerce justice with mercy and conscience,  
And lat no small beist suffir skaith na skornis
- of the field  
were used to do; year  
obedience  
low hewing; due reverence
- rent; deer  
animals
- bird  
make; appear; varieties
- dart at
- eye
- Dom, highest of rank  
there; see
- came; bow down
- monstrous; dreadful; miser  
Piercing of look  
body; face; fierce  
Lovely; agile; movement  
Red; color; ruby's glint  
stood; mighty  
fleur-de-lis encircled gaudy
- purer faire  
let; delfly leas  
couthy  
radiant; royal; see  
beautis  
woody; copus  
Unto; rubyisco
- Exercise  
harm nor scorn

Poem 30: *The Thistle and the Rose*

- 110 Of greit beistis that bene of moir piscence,  
Do law elyk to aipis and unicorns,  
And lat no bowgle with his bresteaus hornis  
The merk plach on oppes for all his pryd,  
Bot in the yok go peciable him besyd.<sup>1</sup>
- 115 Qwhen this was said, with noyis and soan of joy  
All kynd of beistis into their degré  
At onis cryt lawd, "Vive le roy!"  
And till his feit fell with humilité,  
And all thay maid him hoesege and fewté;  
And he did thame ressaif with princely laitis,  
Quhois noble yre is parvere prostratis.<sup>1</sup>
- 120 Sync crownit scho the Egic, king of fowlis,  
And as stell dertis scherpit scho his pennis,  
And bawd him be als just to awppis and owlis  
As unto pacokkins, parpingais, or crennis,  
And mak a law for wycht fowlis and for weannis,  
125 And lat no fowll of rayne do efferay.  
Nor devoir birdis bot his awin pray.
- 130 Than callit scho all flouris that grew on feild,  
Discirmyng all their fassionis and effeiris:  
Upon the awfull Thrisill scho beheld  
And saw him keptit with a busche of speiris.  
Concedring him so able for the weiris,  
A radius croun of rubis scho him gaif  
And said, "In feild go furth and fend the laif,
- 135 "And sen thou art a king, thou be discreet;  
Herb without vertew hald nocht of sic prycce  
As herb of vertew and of odor sueit;  
And lat no nemill vyle and fell of vyce  
Hir fallow to the gudly flour delyce,
- are; greater strength  
*Apply the law equally; apos*  
wild ox; rough  
meek plow; oppress  
yoke; peacefully
- noise  
kinds; beasts according to rank  
loudly; "Long live the King!"
- of  
they all made homage to him; fealty  
receive; behavior  
Whose; wrath
- Then crowned; birds  
steel darts sharpened; feathers  
hawke; ax; curlews  
peacock; parrots, or cranes  
strong; strong  
bird of prey; frighten  
devoir; except; privy
- Distinguishing; kinds; manners  
dreadful Thistle; looked  
guarded by; spears  
Considering; wary  
radiant; rubies; gave  
defend the rest
- since; discreet  
Plant; not; such value  
fragrance sweet  
let  
be equal to; *fleur-de-lis*

<sup>1</sup> to show mercy to the down-trodden

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- 140 Nor latt no wyld weid full of charlichenes  
Compair hir till the lileis nobilnes;  
  
"Nor hald non udre flour in sic dency  
As the fresche Ros of callour reid and quhyt;  
For gif the dois, hant is thyne honesty,  
Conciddering that no flour is so perfyt,  
145 So full of vertew, plesans, and delyt,  
So full of blisfull angelik bewty.  
Imperiall birth, honour, and dignite."
- 150 Than to the Ros scho turnyt hir visage  
And said, "O lusty dochter most benyng,  
Aboif the billy illustare of lynnage,  
Fro the stok ryell rysing fresche and yng,  
But ony spot or macull doing spring,  
Cum, blowme of joy, with jemis to be cround,  
For our the laif thy bewty is renownd."  
  
155 A coistly croun with clarefeld stosis brycht  
This cumly quene did on hir heid inclois,  
Quhilt all the land illumynit of the licht;  
Quhairfor me thocht all flouris did rejois,  
Crying attonis, "Haill be thou richest Ros,  
160 Haill hairbis emprysse, haill freschest quene of flouris!  
To thee be glory and honour at all houris!"  
  
165 Thane all the birdis song with voce on hicht,  
Quhois mirthfull soun wes mervelous to hear,  
The mayvs song, "Haill, Rois most riche and richt,  
That dois up flaresis undir Phebas speir;  
Haill plant of yowth, haill princes dochtrir deir;  
Haill blossom breking out of the blad royll,  
Quhois pretius vertew is imperiall!"
- 170 The merle scho sang, "Haill, Rois of most delyt,  
Haill of all flouris quene and soverane!"  
The lark scho song, "Haill, Rois both reid and quhyt,  
Most plesand flour of mighty culouris twase!"
- let; weed; coarseness  
Compare; to; bly's  
  
Nor hold any other; such regard  
Rose; color  
if  
  
Then; face  
lovely daughter; gracious  
Above; illustrious; family  
royal stock; young  
Without; blemish having sprung  
Come; bloom; grow  
over the rest  
  
clarified  
comely  
Which; by the light  
Whereas; thought; rejoice  
at once  
herbs' empress  
  
sang; high  
Whose; sound; hear  
song-thrush sang; true  
flourish; sphere  
prince's daughter dear  
blood  
Whose  
  
red; white  
pleasing; colors two

Poem 31: To Princess Margaret

- The mychtingaill song, "Haill, Naturis suffragene,  
In bewty, nariour, and every nobilnes,  
In riche array, renoun, and gentilnes!"  
175  
The comensoun voce uprais of birdis small  
Apone this wys: "O blissit be the hour  
That thow wes chosin to be our principlall;  
Welcome to be our princes of honour,  
180 Our perle, our plesans, and our patamour,  
Our pean, our play, our glane felicité:  
Chryst thee coenserf frome all adversité!"  
Than all the birdis song with sic a schout  
That I annone awoilk qahair that I lay,  
185 And with a braid I turnyt me about  
To se this court, bot all wer went away.  
Than up I lenyt, halflingis in affrey,  
And thus I wret, as ye haif hard tofօremow,  
Of lusty May upone the nynt morrow.  
Then; sang; such  
awoke where  
jerk  
but  
rose; halfway in alarm  
wrote; heard before  
ninth morning

31. To Princess Margaret

[Welcum of Scotland to be quene]

Now fayre, faynest of every fayre,  
Princes most plesant and preclare,  
The lustyest one alye that byne:  
Welcum of Scotland to be quene!  
5 Younge tender plant of palcrinad  
Descendyd of impreyalle blode,  
Fresche fragrant floure of fayrehede shene:  
Welcum of Scotland to be quene!  
beauty  
loveliness bright  
10 Sweet lusty lussum lady clere,  
Most myghty kyngis dochter dere,  
Borne of a princes most serene:  
Welcum of Scotland to be quene!  
joyful lovely  
king's daughter  
princess

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- Welcum the rose bothe red and whyte,  
Welcum the floure of our delyte,  
15 Oure speit rejoysing frome the soote beme:  
Welcum of Scotland to be quene!  
Welcum of Scotlandde to be quene!
- spirit gladdening by: sun beam

**32. To Princess Margaret**

[*Gladethe, thon queyne of Scottis regioune*]

- Gladethe, thon queyne of Scottis regioune,  
Ying tendir plant of plesand pulcrinate,  
Fresche flour of yoshe, new germyng to burgeous,  
Our perle of price, our princes fair and gad,  
5 Our charbunkle chosin of hye imperiale blad,  
Our rois riale most reverent under croune,  
Joy be and grace onto thi selicitud:  
Gladethe, thon queyne of Scottis regioune.
- Rejoice; queen  
Young; pleasing  
germinating  
pearl; princess  
high  
rose royal  
majesty
- O hye triumphing paradis of joy,  
10 Lodsteir and lamp of every lustines;  
Of port surmounting Polleszen of Troy,  
Dochter to Pallas in angillik brichnes,  
Masters of murtur and of nobilnes,  
15 Of fresch depictour princes and patroun,  
O hevin in erthe of ferlifull sweetnes:  
Gladethe, thon queyne of Scottis regioune.
- high; paradise  
Lode star; delight  
in manner surpassing
- Murder  
painting  
wondrous sweetnes
- Of thi fair fegour Natur nicht rejoys  
That so thee kervit withe all bir cariys slicht.  
Sche has thee maid this veray wairldis chois,  
20 Schawing one thee bir craftis and bir micht,  
To se quhow fair sche couthe depant a wiche,  
Quhow gad, how noble of all condicoun,  
Quhow womanly in every mannis sicht:  
Gladethe, thon queyne of Scottis regioune.
- figure  
carved, subtle art  
made  
on  
*see here: could depict a person*  
good
- 25 Rois red and quhit, resplendent of colour,  
New of thi knop at morrow fresche atyit
- Rose; white  
had; attired

Poem 33: To Aberdeen

- One stalk yet grene, O yong and tendir flour  
 That with thi luff has ale this regious fift,  
 Gret Gode us graunt that we have long desirit —  
 30 A plauant to spring of thi successiouin,  
 Sync witht ale grace His spreit to be inspirit:  
 Gladeith, thosse queyne of Scottis regious.
- O  
 love; inspired  
 whar  
 from  
 Thow; spirit
- O precius Margreit, pleasand, cleir and qahit,  
 Moir blith and bright na is the beriale schene,  
 35 Moir deir na is the diamant of delit,  
 Moir semly na is the sapheit one to seyne,  
 Moir gudely eik na is the emerant greyne,  
 Moir riche na is the ruby of renowne,  
 Fair gem of joy, Margreit, of thee I meyne:  
 40 Gladeith, thosse queyne of Scottis regious.
- white  
 More; than; beryl bright  
 precious than  
 to look on  
 also: emerald green  
 mean

33. To Aberdeen

[Be blyth and blisfull, burgh of Aberdein]

- Blyth Aberdeane, thow beriall of all tounis,  
 The lamp of bewtie, bountie, and blythnes,  
 Unto the heaven upheyt thy renous is,  
 Of vertew, wisdom, and of worthines;  
 5 He nomit is thy name of nobilnes.  
 Into the eaming of our histic quein,  
 The wall of welth, gaid cheir, and mirrines:  
 Be blyth and blisfull, burgh of Aberdein.
- beryl (i.e., gem)  
 beandy  
 splifed  
 virtue  
 Highly celebrated  
 delightful queen  
 well
- And first hir mett the burges of the toun,  
 Richelie arrayit, as become thame to be,  
 10 Of qahom they cheset four men of renoun  
 In gowans of velvet, young, abill, and histic,  
 To beir the paull of velvets crarnase  
 Abone hir heid, as the custome hes bein.  
 15 Gryt was the sound of the artelyie:  
 Be blyth and blisfull, burgh of Aberdein.
- her; burgesses  
 chose  
 bear; canopy; velvet crimson cloak  
 Above; head  
 artillery

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- Ane fair processoun mett her at the port,  
In a cap of gold and silk full pleasantlie,  
Syne at her entrie with many fair disport  
20 Resavait her on streittis lastilie;  
Quhair first the salutatioun honorabilie  
Of the sweet Virgin godlie mycht be seine,  
The sound of menstrailis blawing to the sky:  
Be blyth and blisfull, burgh of Aberdein.
- And syne thow gart the orient kingis thrie  
Offer to Chryst with benyng reverence  
Gold, sence, and mir with all humilitie  
Schawand Him king with most magnificencie;  
30 Syne quhow the angill, with sword of violence,  
Furth of the joy of Paradice putt clein  
Adame and Eve for innebodience:  
Be blyth and blisfull, burcht of Aberdeen.
- And syne the Bruce, that evir was bold in stour,  
Thow gart as roy cum rydand under croun,  
Richt awfull, strang, and large of porteur,  
As nobill, dredfull, michtie campiou恩.  
35 The royll Stewartis syne, of great renous,  
Thow gart upspring, with branches new and greine,  
Sa gloriousslie quhill glaidid all the toun:  
Be blyth and blisfull, burcht of Aberdeen.
- Syne come than four and twentic maidens ying,  
All claid in greine, of mervelous bewtie,  
With hair detressit, as threidis of gold did hing,  
With quhyt hattis all browderit ryght bravelie,  
45 Playand on timberallis and singand ryght sweetlie.  
That seimlie sort in ordour weill besein  
Did meit the quein, her halsand reverentlie:  
Be blyth and blisfull, burcht of Aberdeen.
- The streittis war all hung with tapestrie;  
50 Great was the pres of peopill dwelt about,  
And pleasant padgeanes playit prattleie.
- gateway  
cape  
Then; delights  
Received; streets joyfully  
Where  
goodly; seen
- then; made  
incense  
Showing  
Then how; angel  
from; entirely  
disobedience  
town (burgh)
- then; battle  
made; king; riding  
awesome; appearance  
mighty champion  
then  
made  
while cheered
- Then came; maidens young  
uncovered; hung  
embroidered
- seimly group; order  
approach; greeting
- streets were  
pretty

Poem 34: To the Queen

- The legeis all did to thair lady loutt,  
Qsha was convoyed with aue royll roatt  
Of gryt barrounes and justie ladyis schene.  
55 "Welcum, our quein!" the commones gaif aue schout:  
Be blyth and blisfull, burcht of Aberdein.
- At hir cuming great was the mirth and joy,  
For at thair croce aboundinglie ranc wyse.  
Until hir Judgeing the toun did hir convey;  
60 Hir for to treit thai sett thair haill ingyne.  
Ane riche present thai did till hir propyne,  
Ane costlie coup that large thing wald contene,  
Coverit and full of cunyeitt gold rycht fyne:  
Be blyth and blisfull, burcht of Aberdein.
- 65 O potent princes, pleasant and preclair,  
Great caus thow hes to thank this nobill toun,  
That for to do thee honours did not spair  
Thair geir, riches, substance, and person,  
Thee to resave on maist fair fasoun.  
70 Thee for to pleis thai socht all way and mein.  
Thairfor so lang as quein thow beiris crowne,  
Be thankfull to this burcht of Aberdein.

34. To the Queen

[*Devoyd languor and leif or lustines*]

- O hasty flour of yowth, benyng and bricht,  
Fresch bloome of bewty, blythfull, bryght and schene,  
Fair hafsum lady, gentill and discret,  
Yung brekand blosum yit on the stalkis grene,  
5 Delytsum lilly, hasty for to be sene:  
Be glaid in hait and expell havines.  
Bair of blis, that evir so blyth hes bene,  
Devoyd languor and leif in lustiness.
- Beycht sterne at morrow that dois the nycht hyn chace,  
10 Of luvys lychtsum day the lyfe and gyd,

begot; bow down  
Who; company  
great; bright  
commone gave

cross  
judging  
entertain; whole intent  
to; present  
cup  
coined

princess; illustrious  
goods  
receive in; fashion  
ways; means  
hours

lovely; gracious  
bloom; joyful  
lovable  
Young budding  
Delightful; joyful  
sorrow  
Bare; merry  
Expel sadness; Dote; joy

Bright star; hence chase  
bright; guide

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- Lat no dirk clud absent fro us thy face,  
Nor lat no sable frome us thy bewty hyd.  
That hes no confort quhair that we go or ryd,  
Bot to behald the berne of thi brychtne;  
15 Banis all baillt and into blis abyd,  
Devoyd languor and leif in lustines.
- Ari thow plesand, lusty, yoing, and fair,  
Full of all vertew and gad condicoun,  
Ryght nobill of blud, ryght wyis and debonaire.  
20 Honorable, gentill, and faythfull of renoun,  
Liberall, lufsum, and lusty of persoun.  
Quhy suld thow than lat sadnes thee oppres?  
In hait be blyth and lay all dolour doun,  
Devoyd languor and leif in lustines.
- 25 I me commend with all humilitie  
Unto thi bewty blisfull and besing.  
To qahome I am and shall ay servand be  
With steidfast hait and faythfull new meining  
Unto the deid without depairting.  
30 For qahais saik I shall my pen addres,  
Sangis to mak for thy reconforting.  
That thow may leif in joy and lustines.
- O fair sweete blossom, now in bewty flouris,  
Unfaidit bayth of culour and vertew,  
35 Thy nobill lord that deid hes done devoir,  
Paid nocht with weeping thy vissage fair of hew.  
O lufsum lusty lady, wyse and trew,  
Cast out all cair and comfort do incres.  
Exyll all sichand, on thy servand rew.  
40 Devoyd languor and leif in lustines.
- dark cloud  
darkness; hide  
hewe; where; ride  
Except; beam  
Bawd; arrow
- You are delightful  
character
- Very; blood; wise  
by reputation
- lovablie; joyful  
Why; then let  
heart; sorrow
- offer myself  
gracious
- whom; shall always  
impositions  
death
- whose; shall
- Unfaded; color  
death; devoured  
Fade not
- sighing; take pity

Poem 35: Eulogy to Bernard Stewart, Lord of Aubigay

35. *Eulogy to Bernard Stewart, Lord of Aubigay*

[*Withe glorie and honour*]

	Renownit, ryall, right reverend, and serene, Lord hic tryumphing in wirschip and valoure, Fro kyngis downe most Cristian knight and kene, Most wyse, most valyand, mooste laureat hic victour.	royal high Christian, fierce valiant stars raised
5	Onto the sterris uphelyt is thyne honour. In Scotland welcum be thyne excellencie To king, queyne, lord, clerk, knight, and servator. Withe glorie and honour, lawde and reverence.	praise
10	Welcum, in stoar most strong, incomparable knight, The fame of armys and flore of vassalage, Welcum, in were moste worthi, wyse, and wight, Welcum, the soan of Mars of moste garde.	battle
15	Welcum, moste lusti branche of our lignage, In every realme oure scheild and our defence, Welcum, our tendir blade of hie parage, With glorie and honouer, lawde and reverence.	blood; rank
20	Welcum, in were the secund Julias, The prince of knightheyd and flour of chevalry, Welcum, most valyeant and victorius, Welcum, invincible victour moste wourthy,	war
25	Welcum, our Scottis chiftane moste dughn, Wyth sowne of claroun, organe, song, and sence. To thee atonis, lord, "Welcum!" all we cry, With glorie and honour, lawde and reverence.	doughty (strong) sound; incense at once
30	Welcum, oure indeficent adjutorie, That evir our naceoun helpit in thare neyd, That never saw Scot yit indigent nor sory Bot thou did hym suport with thi god deid. Welcum, therfor, abufe all livand leyd, Withe us to live and to makk recidence. Quhilk never sail surye for thi saik to bleid, To quham be honour, lawde, and reverence.	unfailing helper nation; their need sorrowful good deeds above every living person Who; hesitate; sake; bleed

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- Is none of Scotland borne fathfull and kynde  
Bot he of naturall inclinacioun  
Dois favour thee wiþe all his heit and mynde,  
Wiþe fervent, tendir, trew intencion,  
And wald of inward hie effectioun  
But dreyd of danger de in thi defencē,  
Or dethe or schame war done to thi personn,  
To quarn be honour, lawde, and reverence.
- Welcum, thow knight moste fortunablie in feild,  
Welcum, in armis moste auerterus and able  
Undir the sun that beris helme or scheild,  
Welcum, thow campion in feght unsoucumbable,  
Welcum, most doughti, digne, and honorable,  
And moist of lawde and hie magnificencē  
Niat undir kingis to stand incomparabile,  
To quarn be honour, lawde, and reverence.
- Throw Scotland, Ingland, France, and Lombardy  
Fleys on weyng thi faise and thi renouane,  
And our all cantreis undirneth the sky  
And oar all strandis fro the sterriis dounē.  
In every province, land, and regiouane,  
Proclamit is thi name of excellencē  
In every cete, village, and in tounē,  
Wiþe glorie and honour, lawd and reverence.
- O feyrse Achill in fures hie courage,  
O strong invinciblie Hector undir scheild,  
O vailleant Arthur in kryghtli vaissalage,  
Agamenon in governance of feild,  
Bold Henniball in batall to do beild,  
Julius in jupert, in wisdom and expence,  
Most fortunate chiftane bothe in yOUTH and eild,  
To thee be honour, lawde, and reverence.
- At parliament thow suld be hye renownit.  
That did so mony victoryse opteyn.  
Thi cristall helme wiþe lawry suld be crownyt,

would; high

Without dread; die

Before (Ere); were

adventurous

not

invincible

doughty; worthy

whose

Through

Fliers; wing

over; countries

over; streams

force; high

process

be courageous

audacity

old age

should; highly

obtain

laurel

Poem 36: Elegy for Bernard Stewart, Lord of Aubigny

- And in thi hand a branche of olyve greyn.  
The sueid of conquis and of knyghteid keyn  
Be boone sold highe before thee in presence,  
To reprent sic man as thou has beyn,  
With glorie and honour, lawde and reverence.
- Hie farius Mars, the god armipotent,  
Rong in the hevin at thyne nativitie.  
Saturnus douse wiþe fyry eyn did blest  
Throw bludy visar men manasing to gar de.  
On thee fresche Venus keist her amourose e,  
On thee Marcurius furtheyet his eloquence.  
Fortuna major did turn hit face on thee,  
Wyth glorie and honour, lawde and reverence.
- Prynce of fredom and flour of gestilnes,  
Sweynd of knyghteid and choise of chevalry,  
This tyme I leſe, for grete prolixnes,  
To tell quhat feildis thou wan in Pikkandy.  
In France, in Bertan, in Naplis and Lambardy,  
As I think eftir wiþe all my diligence,  
Or thou departe, at lengthe for to discry.  
With glorie and hoosour, lawd and reverence.
- B in thi name betaknys batalus,  
A able in feild, R right resounse most hic,  
N nobilnes, and A for auiterus,  
R ryall blude, for daughtines is D,  
V valycantnes, S for strenewite:  
Quhoise krygthli name so schynnyng in clemencie  
For wourfines in gold sold writhis be,  
With glorie and honour, lawd and reverence.

36. *Elegy for Bernard Stewart, Lord of Aubigny*  
[See he is gone, the flour of chevalrie]

Illustrer Lodovick, of France most Cristin king,  
Thow may complain with sighis lamentable

sword, arm

sach

High

Rong

down; fiery eye; look

Through; threatening; make die

cast; eye

poured out

Good Fortune

Sword; the best

leave off (i.e., stop)

field

Britain

Before (Ere); describe

betoken; warlike

adventurous

doughtiness

rigorously

Whose

Christian

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- 5      The death of Bernard Stewart, nobill and ding,  
In deid of armes most asterous and abill,  
Most mychti, wyse, worthie, and confortable  
Thy men of weir to governe and to gy.  
For him, allace, now may thow weir the sabil,  
Sen he is gon, the flour of chevelrie.
- 10     Complaine sould everie noble valiant knyght  
The death of him that doughtie was in deid,  
That many are fo in feild hes put to flight,  
In weris wicht be wisdome and manheid.  
To the Turkes sey all land did his name dreid,  
Qubois force all France in fame did magnifie.
- 15     Of so hie price salnane his place posseid,  
For he is gon, the flour of chevelrie.
- O duifull death, O dragon dolorous!  
Quhy hes thow done so duifallie devoir  
The prince of krychttheid, nobill and chevillesus,  
The witt of weiris, of armes and honour,  
The crop of curage, the strenth of armes in stour,  
The fame of France, the fame of Lamburdy,  
The chois of chiftanes, most awfull in armour,  
The charbuckell, cheif of every chevelrie?
- 25     Pray now for him all that him levet heire,  
And for his saill mak intercessiouir  
Unto the Lord that hes him bocht so deir,  
To gif him mercie and remissiouir.  
And namelic, we of Scottis natioun,  
30     Istill his lyff quhomre most he did affy,  
Forgett we nevir into our orisoun  
To pray for him, the flour of chavelrie.

worthy  
deid: adventures  
comforting  
weir: guide  
teyr  
Sone

doughty: dought  
a ffor: has  
wers strong by  
Turkish ree  
Whose

high: shall none; possess

doleful  
Why: duty

best of commanders  
paragon: battle  
choiceest; awesome

here  
soul  
brought

During; serve  
prayer

*Poem 37: To the King*

**37. To the King**

[In hamsill of this gaid New Yer]

- My prince is God, gif thee gaid grace,  
Joy, glaidnes, confort, and solace,  
Play, pleassance, myrr, and mistic cheer  
In hamsill of this gaid New Yer.
- 5      God gif to thee are blessed chance,  
And of all vertew abundance,  
And grace ay for to perseveir  
In hamsill of this gaid New Yer.
- God give thee gaid prosperitie,  
Fair fortoun and felicitie,  
Evirmair in earth qabill thow ar heit,  
In hamsell of this gaid New Yer.
- 15     The heavinlie Lord His help thee send  
Thy realme to resull and to defend,  
In peace and justice it to steer,  
In hamsell of this gaid New Yer.
- God gif thec blis qharevir thow bownes,  
And send thee many Fraunce crownes,  
Hie liberall heart, and handis not sweir,  
In hamsell of this gaid New Yer.

**38. To the King**

[God gif ye war John Thomsounis man]

- Schir, for your grace bayth nicht and day  
Richt hartic on my kneis I pray  
With all devotious that I can:  
God gif ye war John Thomsounis man!
- 5      For war it so, than weill war me.  
But besefice I wald nocht be,

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- My hard fortoun wer endit than:  
God gif ye war Johnne Thomsounis man!
- Than wald sum reuth within yow rest  
For saik of hir, fairest and best  
Is Bartane sen hir tyme began:  
God gif ye war Johnne Thomsounis man,
- For it micht hurt in no degré  
That on so fair and guude as sche  
Throw hir vewew sic wirschip wan  
Als yow to mak Johnne Thomsounis man.
- I wald gif all that ever I have  
To that condicoun, sa God me saif,  
That ye had vowed to the swan  
Ane yeir to be Johnne Thomsounis man.
- The mersy of that sweet meik Rose  
Said soft yow, Thirsill, I supposis,  
Quhois pykis throw me so reuthles ran:  
God gif ye war Johnne Thomsounis man?
- My advocat, bayth fair and sweet,  
The hale rejoicing of my spreit,  
Wald spied into my erand than,  
And ye war anis Johnne Thomsounis man.
- Ever quhen I think yow hard or dour  
Or mesycles in my succour,  
Than pray I God and sweet Sanct An,  
Gif that ye war Johnne Thomsounis man.
39. *To the King*  
(*My pawefull pars so priclis me!*)
- Sanct Salvatore, send silver sorros!  
It grevis me both evin and morrow,

Poem 39: To the King

- Chasing fra me all cheritie.  
It makis me all blythes to borrow,  
5 My panefull purs so priclis me.
- When I wald blythlie ballatis breif,  
Langour thairis givis me no leif.  
War noctt god howp my hart uplie,  
10 My verry corpis for cair wald cleif,  
My panefull purs so pricillis me.
- Quhen I sett me to sing or dance,  
Or go to plesand pastance,  
Than pancing of penaritie  
Revis that fra my remembrance,  
15 My panefull purs so pricillis me.
- Quhen men that hes pursis in tone  
Pasis to drynk or to dinjone,  
Than mon I keip ase gravetie  
And say that I will fast quhill nose,  
20 My panefull purs so priclis me.
- My purs is maid of sic ase skyns  
Thair will na cors byd it within —  
Fra it as fra the Feynd thay fle!  
Quhaevir tyne, quhaevir win,  
25 My panefull purs so priclis me.
- Had I ase man of oey natioun  
Culd muk on it ase conjuratioun  
To gar silver ay in it be,  
The Devill suld haif no dominatioun  
30 With pyne to gar it prickill me.
- I haif inquyrit in moey a place  
For help and confort in this case,  
And all men sayis, my lord, that ye  
Can best remed for this malice  
35 That with sic ganis prickillis me.

charity

causer; joy; love

povic; prickles (torments)

When; cheerfully poems write

leave (permission)

hope; sustain

body; cleave (tear apart)

pleasing pastimes

Then thinking on poverty

Takes; thoughts

have purses; tone (i.e., that "clink")

ear

Then must; sober face

till noon

made; such

coin remain

From; Fiend

Whoever loses

/Who/ could; spell

make; always

pain; make

have asked

case

remedy; evil

much pain torments

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40. *To the King*

[*Schir, at this feist of benefice*]

Schir, at this feist of benefice	<i>feast where benefices are given</i>
Think that small partis makis grit service,	
And equale distribution	
Makis thame content that hes resoun,	<i>thame</i>
5 And quha hes nane ar plesit na wyis.	<i>who; none; not at all</i>
Schir, quhiddir is it merit mair?	<i>which; invited more</i>
To gif him drink that thirstis sait,	<i>give; surely</i>
Or fill a few man quhill be birst,	<i>full; until</i>
And lat his follow de a thrist,	<i>follow die of</i>
10 Quhilk wyne to drynk als worthie war?	<i>Which; just as; war</i>
It is no glaid collation	<i>light evening meal</i>
Quhair aye makis myrie, aneather lakis down,	<i>Where; another looks</i>
Ane thirstis, aneather playis cop out.	<i>emprises the cup</i>
Lat anis the cop ga round about,	<i>once</i>
15 And wyn the covaris bunesoun.	<i>wine; covetous bumenon</i>

41. *To the King*

[*Of benefice, sir, at everie feist*]

Of benefice, sir, at everie feist,	<i>feast</i>
Quha monyast hes makis maist request,	<i>Who has most makes the most requests</i>
Get thai not all, thai think ye wrang thame.	
Ay is the ewirword of the geist,	<i>Always; refrain; song</i>
5 Griff thame the pelffe to pairt among thame.	<i>Give; pelf (riches); themselves</i>
Sum swelleis swan, sum swelleis duke,	<i>eat (swallows) swan; check</i>
And I stand fastard in a make	<i>fasting; monk</i>
Quhill the effect of all thai fang thame. <sup>2</sup>	
Bot Lord! how petewouslie I huke	<i>pitously; look</i>
10 Quhone all the pelffe thai pairt amang thame.	<i>When</i>

<sup>2</sup> While the most valuable effects they grab for themselves

Poem 42: A Dream

	Of sic hic feistis of sanctis in glorie, Baithie of commoun and propir storie, Qahair lairdis was patronis, oft I sang thame <i>Charitas, pro Dei amore;</i>	<i>At such high feasts: saints Both lords were; [for] them Charity, for the love of God</i>
15	And yit I gat na thing amang thame.	
	This blynd world ever so payis his dett, Riche befoir pure spraidis ay thair nett — To fische al watiris dois belang thame. Quba nathing hes can nathing gett,	<i>in debt poor; always</i>
20	Bot ay as syphir sett amang thame.	<i>cipher (a zero)</i>
	Swa thai the kirk have in thair care, Thai fors bot litill how it fure, Nor of the buikis or bellis quba rang thame. Thai pans not of the prochin pure,	<i>So long as; charge care; fares books</i>
25	Hed thai the pelfe to paire amang thame.	<i>care; parish poor</i>
	So warryit is this warldis rent That sane thairof can be content. Of deathe qahill that the dragoon sting thame. Quba maist hes than sall maist repent,	<i>rabled; good until</i>
30	With largest compt to paire amang thame.	<i>reckoning</i>

42. A Dream

	This hinder nycht, halff sleeping as I lay, Me thocht my chalmer in ane new array Was all deppent with many divers hew Of all the nobill storyis, ald and new, 5      Sen oure first father formed was of clay.	<i>The other night chamber adorned; hues</i>
	Me thocht the liff all bright with lampis lycht, And thairin enterrit many lustie wicht, Sum young, sum old, in sindry wyse arrayit. Sum sang, sum danceit, on instrumentis sum playit, 10     Sum maid disportis with harts glaid and lycht. Thane thocht I thus, "This is an felious phary,	<i>air; light of lamps lively folks varied fashion attired diversion great marvel (illusion)</i>

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	Or ellis my witt ryght woundrouslie dois varie,	witty
	This seimes to me are guidlie compasie,	neem, goodly
	And gif it be are feindlie fantasie,	(f. florid)
15	Defend me, Jhesu and his moder Marie!"	Protecr
	Thair pleasant sang, nor yett thair pleasant toun,	song; music
	Nor yett thair joy, did to my heart redoun.	penetrate
	Me thocht the drenie darmesall Distres,	sadness
	And eik hir sorie sister Hivines,	also: sorrowful; Depression (Haviness)
20	Sad as the leid in haid lay me abone.	Heavy; load; bad; above (i.e., atop)
	And Langour satt up at my beddis heid.	sad
	With instrument full lamentable and deid	dolesful; bear
	Scho playit sangis so duifull to heir,	like
	Me thocht are houres seimeit ay are yeir;	hue; gray; faded; lead
25	Hir hew was wan and swallowed as the leid.	
	Thane com the ladyis danceing in are trece,	dance
	And Nobilnes befoir thame come are space,	
	Saying with cheir, bering and womanly,	benign
	"I se are heir is bed oppressit ly.	see one here; afflicted
30	My sisteris, go and help to get him grace."	relief
	With that anon did start out of a dance	
	Twa sisteris callit Confort and Pleasance,	Delight
	And with twa harpis did begin to sing.	
	Bot I thairof mycht tak na rejoicing.	
35	My heavines opprest me with sic mischance.	such misery
	Thay saw that I not glader wox of cheir,	waxed (became); mood
	And thairof had thai winder all, but weir,	wonder; without <i>fay</i> doubt
	And said are lady that Persaveing hecht,	Insight was called
	"Of hevines he fellis sic a wecht.	feels much; weight
40	Your melody he pleisis not till heir.	does not enjoy hearing
	"Scho and Distres hir sister dois him greve."	vit
	Quod Nobilnes, "Qahow sal be thame eschew?"	How; avoid
	Thane spak Discretiouan, are lady richt beting,	gracious

Poem 42: A Dream

	"Wirk eftir me and I shall gar him sing, And lang or nicht gar Langar tak hir leve."	<i>shall cause before night make</i>
45	And then said Wilt, "Gif thai work not be thee, But onie dout thai shall not work be me." Discretious said, "I know his malady. The strok he feillis of melancholie, And, Nobilnes, his lechzing lyis in thee.	<i>if By Without any doubt feels healing lies</i>
50	"Or evir this wight at heart be haill and feir, Both thow and I most in the court appeir, For he hes lang maid service thair in vane. With sum reward we mane him quyt againe, Now in the honour of this guid New Yer."	<i>Before; man; healthy; fair must must; repay</i>
55	"Weill worth thee, sister," said Considerance, And I shall help for to mantene the dance." Thane spak ane wicht callit Blind Effectious: "I shall befoir yow be with myne electioun; Of all the court I have the governance."	<i>Weill may you succeed person in my official function</i>
60	Thane spak ane constant wycht callit Ressooun, And said, "I grant yow hes beine lord a sessoun In distributious, bot now the tyme is gone. Now I may all distribute myne alone. Thy wrangous deidis did evir mane erchesoun.	<i>have been by myself only unjust deeds; every man injure</i>
65	"For tyme war now that this mane had sumthing, That lange hes bene ane servand to the king. And all his tyme nevir flatter couthe nor faine, Bot hanblie into ballat wyse complainie And patientlie indare his tormenting.	<i>could; pretend in wise songs</i>
70	"I cōversall him be mirrie and jocound. Be Nobilnes his help mon first be found." "Weill spokin, Ressooun my brother," quoth Discretious; "To sett on dies with Iordis at the Cessious Into this realme yow war worth morey ane pound."	<i>cheerful By; man it; day were</i>
75		

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	Thane spak amone Inportunite:	Inportunite make: succeed always
	"Ye sal not gar him speid without me, For I stand ay befoir the kingis face. I sal him deiff or ellis myself mak face, Bot gif that I befoir him servit be.	deaff; else; however Unless
80		
	"Ane besy askar sooner sal be speid Na sal twa besy servandis out of drcid, And he that askis not tyses bot his word, Bot for to tyne lang service is no bound. Yett thecht I nevir to do sic folie deid."	diligent supplicant; succeed Than; without a doubt loses [nothing]; word wante; joke such [af] foolish deed
85		
	Thane com anon ane callit Schir Johnne Kirkpakar, Of many cutes are miichtie undertaker. Quod he, "I am possest in kirkis sevin, And yitt I think thai grow sal till ellevin Or he be servit in ane, yone ballat maker.	Church-gatherer pastoral charges in possession of eleven Before; you hallad
90		
	And then Schir Bet-the-Kirk, "Sa mot I thryff, <i>Destroy-the-Church</i> , "So might I derive I haif of basic servandis four or fyve, And all direct unto sindrie steidis, Ay still awaiting upoun kirkmenses deidis, Fra quham sun tithingis will I heir belyff!"	have destined; farmsteads churchmen's debts hear of soon
95		
	Quod Resoun than, "The ballance gois unsevin That thew, allece, to serff hes kirkis sevin, And sevin als worth kirk not haifand ane. With gredines I sie this world ourgane, And sufficience dwells not bot in Heavyn."	unseven also as worth [a] church; having see; overrun satisfaction; not but (i.e., only)
100		
	"I have not wyt thairof," quod Temperance, "For thecht I bald him evinlie the ballance And but ane eair full miicht till him wey. Yett will he tak another and gar it saey. Quha best can rewll wald muist have governance."	blame though weigh another; come; away
105		
	Patience to me, "My freind," said, "Mak guid cheir, And on the prince depend with humelie feir. For I full weill dois know his nobill intent:	humble bearing well do

Poem 43: *The Headache*

He wald not, for aue bischopperikis rent,	Bishopperic's income
110 That yow war unrewardit half aue yeir."	were
Then as an fary thai to dair did frak,	Then like a vision; door; rash
And schot aue gone that did so raidlie rak	a gout; rudely roar
Quhill all the aerd did raird the ransbow under.	earth; resound; rainbow
On Leith sandis me thocht scho brak in sounder,	broke
115 And I awo did walkin with the crak.	soon wakened; noise

43. *The Headache*

My heid did yak yester nicht,	ache
This day to mak that I na nicht.	compose verse; might not
So stir the magryme dois me meryie,	painfully; migraine; disable
Perseing my brow as oys ganycie.	Piercing; across
5 That scant I laik may on the licht.	scarcey; look
And now, schir, laitlic ellir mes	shortly; man
To dyt thocht I begowthe to dres,	wrote though I tried to begin
The sentence lay full evill till find,	words; hard to
Unsleipit in my heid behind,	Drowsy
10 Dullit in dulnes and distres.	Dulled by heaviness
Foll oft at morrow I apeyne	spirit
Quhen that my cutage aleipeing lyis.	
For mirth, for mestraltie and play,	revelry
For din nor dancing nor deray.	
15 It will not walkin me no wise.	awaken in me at all

44. *To the King*

[For to considerre is aue pane]

This wavrand warldis wretchednes,	unready
The failycand and frutles bissines,	failing; activities
The mispent tym, the service vase,	
For to considerre is aue pane.	reflection; painful

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- 5      The slydand joy, the glaidnes schort,  
The feynyeid laif, the fals confort,  
The swet abyd, the slichtfell trane,  
For to considder is ase pane.  
  
elusive (sliding)  
pretended  
delay; subtle share
- 10     The sugart mouthis with myndis thairfra,  
The figurt speiche with faceis tua,  
The plesand tounis with harts unplane,  
For to considder is ase pane.  
  
sugared words; thoughts otherwise  
ornate; faces two  
contrary
- 15     The labour lost and lieill service,  
The lang avail on humill wyse,  
And the lytill rewarde agane,  
For to considder is ase pane.  
  
loyal  
in humble fashion
- 20     Nocht, I say, all be this castré,  
France, Ingland, Ireland, Almanie,  
Bot als be Italie and Spaine,  
Quhilk to considder is ase pane.  
  
Not; only in; country  
also in
- 25     The change of wairld fro weill to wo,  
The honourable use is all ago  
In hall and boar, in burch and plane,  
For to considder is ase pane.  
  
bower; city; place
- 30     Beleif dois liep, traist dois nocht turie,  
Office dois flit and courtis dois vary,  
Parpos dois change as wynd or tane,  
Quhilk to considder is ase pane.  
  
does leap fawayf, trust  
Invention
- 35     Gud rewle is banist our the bordour  
And rangat ringis but oys ordour  
With reird of rebaldis and of swane,  
Quhilk to considder is ase pane.  
  
Good rule; banished over  
riot prevails without any order  
noise; ribald; workers
- 35     The pepill so wicket ar of feiris,  
The frutis erde all witnes beiris,  
The ayr infectit and prophase,  
Quhilk to considder is ase pane.  
  
wickedly are treated by the friars  
earth; bears

Poem 44: To the King

- The temporele stait to gryp and gather,  
 The sone disheris wald the fater  
 And as ase dyvoor wald him demane,  
 Quhilk to considder is ase pane.
- Kirkmen so halie ar and gade  
 That on thair conscience, rowme and rule,  
 May turne aucht oxin and ase wane,  
 Quhilk to considder is ase pane.
- I knew nocht how the Kirk is gydit,  
 Bot beneficis ar nocht leill devydit.  
 Sam men hes sevin and I nocht ase,  
 Quhilk to considder is ase pane.
- And sum unworthy to browk ase stall  
 Wald clym to be ase cardisall —  
 Ase bischoprik may nocht him gane,  
 Quhilk to considder is ase pane.
- Unswurthy I, amang the laif,  
 Ase kirk dois craif and name can have.  
 Sum with ase thesif playis passage plane,<sup>1</sup>  
 Quhilk to considder is ase pane.
- It cumis be king, it cumis be quene,  
 Bot ay sic space is us betwene  
 That name can schot it with ase flane,  
 Quhilk to considder is ase pane.
- It micht have cuming in schortar quyll  
 Fra Calyecot and the New Fund Yle,  
 The partis of transmeridiane,  
 Quhilk to considder is ase pane.

*worldly estate to grasp; hoard  
 son would disinherit (dispossess)  
 devourer; deal with*

*large; rough  
 several oxen; wain (wagon)*

*guided  
 fairly divided  
 not one*

*own  
 climb  
 not; gain  
 remainder  
 crane*

*comes from  
 such  
 cross; arrow*

*come in shorter time  
 Calcutta; New Found Dle*

<sup>1</sup> Some with a large number of churches play dice

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- 65 It micht be this, had it bein kynd,  
Cuming out of the desertis of Ynde<sup>1</sup>  
Our all the grit se oceane,  
Quhilk to considerre is ane pane. Over; great sea
- 70 It micht have cuming out of all ayrtis —  
Fra Paris and the orient partis,  
And fra the ylis of Aphrycane,  
Quhilk to consydder is ane pane.
- 75 It is so lang in cuming me till,  
I dreid that it be quyt gane will,  
Or bakwart it is tennit agane,  
Quhilk to considerre is ane pane.
- 80 Upon the heid of it is hecht  
Bayth unicornis and crownis of wecht.  
Quhen it dois cum, all men dois frane,  
Quhilk to considerre is ane pane.
- 85 I wait it is for me provydit,  
Bot sa done tytsum it is to byd it,  
It breekis my haire and birstis my brane,  
Quhilk to considerre is ane pane.
- 90 And for my caris in sindrie place,  
With help, schir, of your nobill grace,  
My sillie saule sall never be slane,  
Na for sic syn to suffer pane.

directions (points of the compass)

eastern land (i.e., Asia)

iles; Africa

to

quite gone astray

Before

head; promised

weight

ask

know

But; tiresome; await

burst; break

abbey; with I not

hardly; heather

fair (happy)

charges; various

innocent soul; alain

Nor; such

<sup>1</sup> Lines 65–66: *It might by this [time], had it been according to the natural order of things, / Coming out of (all the way from) the deserts of India*

Poem 45: Against the Solicitors at Court

- 95      Experience dois me so insypr,  
          Of this fals failyeand world I tyne,  
          That evermore flytis lyk ane phane,  
          Quhilk to considerer is ane pane.  
  
100     The foremost holp yit that I have  
          In all this world, sa God me save,  
          Is in your grace, bayth crop and grayse,  
          Quhilk is ane lessing of my pane.
- inspire  
failing  
fly; phantom  
  
highest hope  
  
both blossom; fruit  
leaving

45. Against the Solicitors at Court

- Be divers wyis and operaciones  
Men makis in court their solistationes:  
Sum be service and diligence,  
Sum be continuall residence.  
5      Sum one his substance dois abyd  
Quhill fortoune do for him provyd.  
Sum singis, sum dances, sum tellis storyis,  
Sum lat at evin bringis in the Moryis.  
Sum fiedis, sum feryeis, and sum flatteris,  
10     Sum playis the fail and all owt clatteris.  
Sum man, musand be the waw.  
Lukis as be mycht nocht do with aw.  
Sum standis in a nuk and rownes.  
For covetyce anesthair neir swownes.  
15     Sum beris as he wald ga wud  
For hait dosyr of wardis god.  
Sum at the Mes leves all devocione  
And besy labours for prensacione.  
Sum hes thair advocattis in chalmir  
20     And takis thameseliff thaicroff no glawnir.  
My sempillnes, amang the laift,  
Wait of na way, sa God me saift,  
Bot with ane hummble cheir and face  
Reffleris me to the kyngis grace.  
25     Methink his gracious countenancie  
In ryches is my sufficiance.
- By various ways  
  
Some by  
  
one; divers  
Until; does  
  
late at night; Morris dance  
jest; pretends  
fool; constantly chatters  
mating by the wall  
not belong with the others  
nook and whisper  
nearly  
act as if; go mad  
hoc; worldly goods  
Mass  
promotion  
chamber  
  
bring on themselves no slander  
others  
Knows of; save  
  
Recommends  
face

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46. *To the King*

[*Schir, ye have many servitousis*]

	Schir, ye have many servitousis And officiaris of dyvers curie: Kirkmen, courtmen, and craftsmen fyne, Doctouris in jure and medycyne,	<i>functions</i>
5	Divinouris, rhetoris, and philosophouris, Astrologis, artistis, and oratouris, Men of armes and vallyeand knyghtis And many other godlie wichtis,	<i>law</i> <i>Theologians, rhetoricians</i>
10	Masicianis, menstralnis, and mirrie singaris, Chevalouris, cawandaris, and flingaris, Curyouris, carveris, and carpertaris, Beildaris of baekis and ballingaris,	<i>vulnus</i> <i>goodly race</i>
15	Masounis lyand upon the land And schipwrichtis heward upone the strand. Glasing wichtis, goldsmithis, and lapidaris, Peyntouris, payntouris, and potingaris —	<i>entertainers; dancers</i> <i>Coiners, carvers</i> <i>Builders; skips; boats</i> <i>Masons resting</i> <i>cutting; shore</i>
20	And all of thair craft cunning And all at aris lawboring, Quhilk pleisand ar and honorable And to your bienes profitable	<i>skillful</i> <i>once</i> <i>pleasing</i> <i>rightness</i>
25	And richt convenient for to be With your hie regale majestie, Deserving of your grace most ding Bayth thank, rewarde, and cherising.	<i>facing</i> <i>worthy</i>
30	And thocht that I amang the laif Unworthy be ane place to have Or in thair numerer to be tald, Als lang in mynd my work salld hold, Als haill in everie circumstance, In forme, in mater, and substance, But wering or consumptious, Roust, canker, or corruptious As ony of thair werkis all, Sappois that my rewarde be small.	<i>though; rest</i> <i>number; counted</i> <i>shall be remembered</i> <i>whole (i.e., perfect); respect</i> <i>Without croding</i> <i>Rust, disease</i> <i>Although</i>

Poem 46: To the King

		Thought
35	Bet ye sa gracious ar and meik That on your bienes followis eik Aneuthir soet more miserabil Thocht thai be nocht sa profitable: Fenycooris, fleichouris, and flutteraris,	so; are; humble after; baseness; also
40	Cryaeis, craikaris, and clatteraris, Soukaris, gouskaris, gledaris, gunnaris, Monsouris of France (gud clarat cunnaris), Inopportoun askaris of Yrland kynd, And meit nevaris lyk out of mynd,	Fakes; coopers Loudmouths; boasters; gossipers Parasites; complainers; yes-men Gentlemen; wine experts Importuning beggars; Ireland food thieves
45	Scaffaris and scamleris in the nake, And hali huntaris of draik and dusk, Thrimlaris and thristarlis as thai war woid, Kokenis, and kennis na man of guude, Schulderaris and schovaris that hes no schame	Spongers; parasites; corner drake; duck Joustors; thwarters; were mad
50	And to no cunning that can cleane, And can non uthir craft nor curis Bet to mak thrang, schir, in your daris, And rusche in quhair thay counsale heir And will at na man nutrit leyr;	know; skill strong; doors where breeding bears also, alchemists
55	In quintiscence eik, ingynouris joly That far can multiple in folie — Fantastik fulis, bayth fals and gredy, Of young untrew and hand evill diedie. Few dar of all this last addiccion	fools given to
60	Cum in Tolbuyth without remissioune.	Tolbooth
	And thocht this nobill cunning sort — Quhom of befoir I did report — Rewardit be, it war bot ressoun; Thairst sold no man mak enchesoun.	
65	Bot quhen the uther falsis syce That feistit at Cokelbeis gryce Ar all rewardit, and nocht I, Than on this fals warld I cry "Fy!"	Therefore; objection fools ignorant feasted; sucking pig
70	My hart neir bristis than for teyne, Qahilk may nocht suffer nor sustene So grit abusoun for to se Daylie in court befoir reyn e.	Then hurts thou; pain abuse; see eye

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	And yit more penance wald I have,	penance
	Had I rewarde amang the laif.	reward
75	It wald me sumthing satisfie	
	And les of my malancolie,	lesser
	And gar me morey falt ourse	cause; faults [to] overlook (ignore)
	That now is brayd befoir myn e.	broad (i.e., evident); eye
	My mind so fer is set to flyt	wold
80	That of nocht ellis I can endyt.	write
	For oþer man my hart tobreik,	either must; burst
	Or with my pen I man me wreik	must; be avenged
	And sen the tane most nedis be —	since the one; need
	Into malancolie to de,	die
85	Or lat the venim ische all out —	let; venom flow
	Be war anone, for it will spout.	
	Gif that the tryackill cum nocht tyf	If; medicine; soon
	To swage the swalme of my dispyt.	assage; swelling; anger

47. *To the King*

[Complaine I wald]

	Complaine I wald, wist I quosome till,	would, knew I to whom
	Or unto quosome darett my bilt:	[to] direct; letter
	Quishider to God that all thing stairis,	Whether; steers (directs)
	All thing seis, and all thing heiris,	sees; heirs
5	And all thing wrocht in dayis seveyne,	made
	Or till His Moder, Queen of Heveyne,	
	Or unto wardlie prince heir dowsne —	worldly prince down here [on earth]
	That dois for justice weit a crowne —	
	Of wrangis and of gryt injuris	great
10	That nobillis is that dayis insuris.	
	And men of vertew and curing,	knowledge
	Of wit and wysdome in gydding,	guiding
	That nocht care in this cowrt conqrys	nothing care; win over
	For lawte, luiff, nor lang servys.	loyalty, love
15	Bot fowll jow-jowndane-hedit jewellis,	bad Jew-pox-pot-headed ruffians
	Cowkin kenscis and culoun kevellis,	Be-shitter knaves; rascal rogues
	Staffettis, strekouris, and stafische strummellis,	Lackeys; snarly humblers (?)
	Wyld haschbaldis, haggerbaldis, and hummellis,	fobscurse phrasen[?]

Poem 47: To the King

	Druncartis, dysouris, dyvowris, drevellis,	<i>Drunkard, dicer, debtor, worthless lad</i>
20	Misgydit memberis of the Devellis,	
	Mismad mandragis of mastis strynd,	<i>Ali made mandrake; man's grace</i>
	Crawdones, couhirtis, and theiffis of kynd,	<i>Traitors, cowards; bare thieves</i>
	Blaist-mouit bladyeanes with bledder cheikis	<i>Loose-mouthed blowhard; puffy-cheeks</i>
	Clabfacet clucasnes with clatit breikis,	<i>yokels; patched breeches</i>
25	Chuff midding churllis, cuming of cart fillaris	<i>Dung heap churl, sired by: fillers</i>
	Gryt glaschewe-hedit gorge-millaris,	<i>jug-headed glutton (?)</i>
	Evill horrible monstrier, fals and fowl.	<i>foul</i>
	Sum causles clekis till him ane cowll,	<i>clutches; hood</i>
	Anc gryt convent fra syne to tis,	<i>after that; enice</i>
30	And he himself exampill of vys,	<i>vice</i>
	Enterand for geir and no devocion.	<i>material goods</i>
	The Devill is glaid of his promsocion.	
	Sum tamys ane rokkat fra the rey	<i>begs; bishop's vestment; king</i>
	And dois ane dastari destroy,	<i>coward</i>
35	And sum that gaittis ane personage	<i>personage</i>
	Thinkis it a present for a page.	
	And on no wayis content is he	<i>in</i>
	"My lord" quhill that he callit be.	
	Bot quhow is he content or nocht	<i>whether</i>
40	(Dense ye abowt into yowr thocht)	<i>Judge</i>
	The leit sonne of erll or lord	<i>learned</i>
	Upones this ruffle to remond,	<i>ruffian to reflect</i>
	That with ald castigis bes him cled,	<i>cast-off apparel</i>
	His erandis for to ryng and red	<i>run; arrange</i>
45	(And he is maister native borne	
	And all his eldaris him beforene,	<i>much more intelligent</i>
	And mekle mair cuening be sic thre	
	Hes to possied ane digniti).	<i>Testing (assaying)</i>
	Saying his odias ignorance	
50	Painting ane peelottis countenance,	<i>Displaying (lit., painting)</i>
	Sa far above him set at tabell	
	That wort was for to mak the stabell —	
	Anc pykthunk in a peelottis clais	<i>flatterer; clothes</i>
	With his wavill feit and wirrok tais,	<i>twisted feet; calloused toes</i>
55	With hoppir hippis and benches narrow	<i>flabby hips; skinny shins</i>
	And bausy handis to beir a barrow;	<i>clammy (greasy?)</i>

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- With lat schoulderis and lattard bak  
Qwhilk Natur maid to beir a pak;  
With gredy mynd and glaschane game,  
60 Mell-hedit lyk ane mortar stane,  
Fenyng the feris of ane lord  
(And he ase strumbell, I stand ford)  
And he evirnoir as he dois rys,  
Nobles of bluid he dois dispys,  
65 And helpis for to hald thame downe  
That thay rys never to his renoune.
- bowed; crooked  
pack (peddler's bundle)  
oily (?) face  
block-headed  
Counterfeiting; bearing  
beast (?); guarantee  
rise  
despise
- Thairfair, O prince maist honorable,  
Be is this menes merciabill,  
And to thy auld servandis haif'e,  
70 That lang hes lipinit into thee,  
Gif I be ase of tha myself,  
Throw all regiones hes bein hard tell,  
Of qwhilk my wrytting witnes beris.  
And yete thy danger ay me deris.  
75 Hot after danger cumis grace,  
As hes bein herd in mony piece.
- mater merciful  
have [an] eye  
trusted  
if those myself  
heard  
reluctance; hurts
48. *To the King*  
[Exces of thocht dois me mischeif]
- Schir, yit remember as befoir  
How that my youthe is done forloir  
In your service with pane and greiff.  
Gud conscience cryis reward thairfair,  
8 Exces of thocht dois me mischeif.
- has been entirely spent  
pain  
Good  
harm
- Your clarkis ar servid all aboute,  
And I do lyke ase rid halk schoot  
To cum to luce that hes na leif,  
Qwhair my plurmis begynnis to mowt.  
10 Exces of thocht dois me mischeif.
- fed  
a red hawk  
permission  
*Although my feathers; molt*

Poem 48: To the King

- Forget is ay the falconis kynd,  
Bot ever the myttell is hard in mynd;  
Qubone the gled dois the peirtricis preiff,  
The gentill goishalk gois undynd.  
Exces of thocht dois me mischeiff.
- The pyat withe the partie cote  
Feynyeis to sing the mychtingale note,  
Bot scho cannot the corchet cleiff  
For hasknes of hir carleche thron.  
Exces of thocht dois me mischeiff.
- Ay fairast feiddis hes farrest foulis.  
Suppeis thai have na sang bot yowlis,  
In sylver caiges thai sit at cheif;  
Kynd native nestis dois clek bot owlis.  
Exces of thocht dois me mischeiff.
- O gentill egill, how may this be —  
Quhilk of all foulis dois heast fle —  
Your leggis, qaly do ye not releif  
And chirreis thame eftir thair degré?  
Exces of thocht dois me mischeiff.
- Qubone servit is all other man,  
Gentill and sempill of everie clan —  
Kyne of Rauf Colyard and Johnne the Reif —  
Nothing I gett nor conqueis can.  
Exces of thocht dois me mischeiff.
- Thocht I in courte be maid refuse  
And have few vertewis for to ruse,  
Yit am I cum of Adame and Eve  
And fane wald leif as utheris dois.  
Exces of thocht dois me mischeiff.
- Or I suld leif in sic mischance,  
Giff it to God war na grevance,  
To be ane pykthunk I wald preif.
- Forget; always; breed (race)*  
*inferior raptor; firmly remembered*  
*Whet; kite; partridge eat*  
*gooshawk; undined (unfed)*
- maggie; parti-colored cat*  
*Pretends*  
*high notes cleave (trill?)*  
*buskiness; churlish*
- feathers; farthest [away] birds*  
*Although*  
*in places of honor*  
*hold only owl*
- eagle*  
*Whick; highest fly*  
*lieges; relieve*  
*cherish*
- When; men*  
*Nobles and commoners*  
*(i.e., the likes of); Reeve*  
*acquire*
- Thought; turned down*  
*virtues; boast about*
- Fate; live as others do*
- Before; live; such misfortune*  
*If; were*  
*tycophant; prove*

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- For thai in wairld wantis na plesance. Jack  
 45 Exces of thocht dois me mischeif.
- In sum pairt of myselffe I pleinye complain  
 Quhone utheris dois flattir and feynye. When, pretend  
 Allace, I can bot ballatis breif. poems write  
 Sic barnheid leidis my brydill reynye. Such childhood leads my bridle reins  
 50 Exces of thocht dois me mischeif.
- I grant my service is bot lycht. admit: of little value  
 Thairfoir, of meryce and not of ryght. mercy  
 I ask you, schir, no man to greiff. grieve  
 Sum medecyne gif that ye mycht. medicine (relief) if; might  
 55 Exces of thocht dois me mischeif.
- Name can renseiid my maledie cure; illness  
 Sa weill as ye, schir, veralie. truly  
 With ase benefice ye may preiff. prove  
 And gif I mend not haistalie. if  
 60 Exces of thocht lat me mischeif.
- I wes in youthe on nurcice kne nurse's  
 Cald "dandillie, bischop, dandillie." Colled  
 And quhone that age now dois me greif when  
 A sempill vicar I cannot be.  
 65 Exces of thocht dois me mischeif.
- Jok that wes went to keip the stirkis Jock: young bulls  
 Can now draw him ase cleik of kirkis receive; fayful  
 With ase fale cairt into his sleif card up his sleeve  
 Worthe all my ballatis under the bytkis. poems; birches  
 70 Exces of thocht dois me mischeif.
- Twa curis or thre bes uplandis Michell ecclesiastical livings  
 With dispensationis in ase knitchell. papal licenses; bundle  
 Thocht he fra nolt had new tane leif. Though; cattle; taken life  
 He playis with totum and I with nyuell. everything; nothing  
 75 Exces of thocht dois me mischeif.

Poem 49: To the King

	How could I leif, and I not landit, Nor yet with the benefice am blandit? I say not, schir, yow to repreiff, Bot deutes I go ryght neirhand it.	live; landed consoled reprove come very close to it
80	Exces of thocht dois me mischeiff.	
	As saule into Purgatorie, Leifand in pane with hoip of glorie, So is myselffe, ye may beleiff, In hoip, schir, of your adjutorie.	Living; hope
85	Exces of thocht dois me mischeiff.	hope; help

49. To the King

[That I said be ane Yowillis yald]

	Schir, lat it never in toun be told That I said be ane Yowillis yald. <sup>1</sup>	said
	Sopposis I war ane ald jaid aver, Schott furth our clewch to squische the clever,	Even if I were a worn-out cart-horse (jade)
5	And hed the strenthis of all Strenewer, I wald at Youll be housit and stald:	Sow; over hillside; crop; clover had; strength of Tale; stalled
	Schir, lat it never in toun be told That I said be ane Yowillis yald,	
10	I am ane asild hors, as ye know, That ever in dull dois drag and draw.	pain does drag
	Gryt court hors puttis me fra the staw, To fang the fog be firthe and fald.	Great; horses put take; by wood; field
	Schir, lat it never in toun be told That I said be ane Yowillis yald,	
15	I heff run lang furth in the feild On pastouris that ar plane and peld.	have plain; bare taken; age

<sup>1</sup> That I should be a Taletide rug (i.e., a horse put out to pasture; "holiday" horse too old to work)

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- My bekis ar speuning, be and bald.  
Schir, lat it never in toun be tald  
That I suld be ane Yowillis yald.
- My maine is turned into quhyt,  
And thairof ye heff all the wyt.  
Quhen uthair hors hed brane to byt,  
I gat bot gris, grype giff I wald.  
Schir, lat it never in towne be tald  
That I suld be ane Yowillis yald.
- I was never daudit into stabell.  
My lyffthes bein so miserabell,  
My hyd to offer I am abell  
For evill schood strae that I neiv wald.  
Schir, lat it never in towne be tald  
That I suld be ane Yowillis yald.
- And yett, supposis my thift be thyne,  
Gif that I die your aucht within  
Lat nevir the scutteris have my skin,  
With ugliche gumes to be grawin.  
Schir, lat it nevir in toun be tald  
That I could be ane Yauillis yald.
- The court hes done my carage caill  
And maid me ane forriddin mull.  
Yett to weir trapparis at the Yuill,  
I wald be spurrat at everie spald.  
Schir, lett it nevir in toun be tald  
That I could be ane Yuallis yald.
- Now lufferis cummis with larges lowd.  
Quhyt could not palfrays thone be proud,  
Quhen gilletis wil be schord and schroud  
That riddin ar baith with lord and lawd?  
Schir, lett it nevir in toun be tald  
That I could be ane Yuallis yald.

*norik; protruding, high and bold*

*maise; white  
already know  
other horses had bran to eat  
only grass; if*

*pampered*

*hale*

*pitiful straw; star would*

*gum*

*although; prosperity; messenger  
if; property  
cobblers*

*gum*

*made; courage cool  
overworked mule  
trappings; Tule  
larch*

*lovers come; great generosity  
Why  
mares; adorned, covered  
by nobles; commoners*

Poem 50: *Of People Hard to Please*

	Quhen I was young and into ply And wald cast gammaldis to the sky, I had beise bocht in realms by. Had I consentit to be sauld.	in good condition gammaldis (i.e., kick up my heels) beise: lands nearby sauld
55	Schir, lett it nevir in toun be tauld That I could be ase Yuillis yald.	
	With gentill hors quhen I wald knyp, Thane is thair laid on me ase qhip, To colleveris than man I skip	noble; nibble whip
60	That scabbit at, hes cruk and cald. Schir, lett it nevir in toun be tauld That I could be ase Yuillis yald.	coal horses; must; go scabby are; bowed (name); cold
	Thocht in the stall I be not clappit, As cursours that in silk beine trappit, With ase new hous I wald be happit	Thought; pampered cousins; are dressed
65	Aganis this Crysthimes for the cald. Schir, lett it nevir in toun be tauld That I could be ase Yuillis yald.	cloth; covered Christmas
	<i>Responso Regis</i>	<i>The King's Response</i>
70	Effer our wrettingis, thesauet, Tak is this gray hors, auld Dunbar, Quhilk in my aucht with service trew In lyart changeit is his hew.	directions, treasure
	Gair hors him new aganis this Yuill, And busk him lyk ase bischopis maill,	Who; possession
75	For with my hand I have indost To pay quhat evir his trappoueris cost.	Uno gray has changed; hue Prepare for him a covering dress himself; male endorsed trappings

50. *Of People Hard to Please*

Four maner of folkis ar evill to pleis. Ane is that riches bes and eis, Gold, silver, cattell, cornis, and ky, And wald have part fra utheris by.	difficult to please One; has wealth and ease property (chattel); grain; cattle (kine) from others nearby
--	---

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- 5      Aneither is of land and rest.  
So great ane lord and ane potent  
That he may neither newill nor gy.  
Yet he wald have fra utheris by.
- Another; income  
mighty  
neither rule nor guide
- 10     Ane is that hes of nobill bluid  
Ane lusty lady, fair and guid,  
Boith vertuous, wyse, and womanly,  
And yett wald have another by.
- Another; but  
A lively
- 15     Aneither dois so dourlie drink,  
And aill and wyne within him sink.  
Quhill in his wame no roome be dry,  
Bot he wald have fra utheris by.
- heavily  
ale  
That; womb (belly); space
- 20     In earth no wicht I can perseav  
Of guid so great abundance have,  
Nor in this world so welthiful wy.  
Bot he wald have frome utheris by.
- One; person  
good  
wealthy a person
- 25     Bot yitt of all this gold and guid  
Or uther canyie, to conchaid,  
Quhaevir it have, it is not I.  
It gois frome me to utheris by.
- good  
other (kind of) wealth
- 30     And nemlie at this Chrytis Mes,  
Quharevir Schir Gold maid his regres.  
Of him I will na larges cry.  
He yeid fra me till utheris by.
- especially; Christmas  
Whenever; has made his return  
gifts cry out for  
turned
- 35     Of him I will na larges cry.  
He yeid fra me till utheris by.

**§1. The Asrichair**

Lacina schyning in silence of the nycht,  
The hevyn all being full of sterriis bricht,  
To bed I went, bot thair I take no rest.

The moon  
stars

Poem 51: *The Antichrist*

- With havig thocht so sair I wes opprest  
That sair I langit eftir the dayis licht.  
sorely  
greatly / longed for
- Of Fortoun I compleosit havalie  
That scho to me stade so contrariouslie,  
And at the last, quhenone I had taret oft,  
For werynes on me a slamer soft.  
heavily  
stood so opposed  
when  
shamer
- Come with a dreming and a fantasic.  
10
- Me thodlit Dame Fortoun with a frowmit cheir  
Stade me beforene, and said on this manere:  
"Thow suffir me to wirk gif thow do weill,  
And preis thee not to stryve aganis my quheill,  
Qwhilk everie wardlie thing dois turne and steit.  
angry look  
in  
(f; do well (i.e., be wise)  
urge; wheel  
worldly; guide
- "Fall morry ane I set upon the heycyte,  
And makis morry fall law down to lyght.  
Upones my stagis or that thow do ascend,  
Traist wele thi trouble is neir at ane end,  
Seing thir takynnis; quhairfor thow mark thame richt.  
(a) one; bright  
low; fall  
steps before  
Trust  
these ones; carefully
- "Thy trublit gaist sall never be degest,  
Nor thow into no benefice possest,  
Qwhill that ane abbot him cleythe in eirmis penrys  
And fle up in the air amang the crennys,  
And as a falcon fair flo east to west.  
spirit; calm  
in possession of a church living  
Cowl; clothe; eagle's feathers  
cranes  
travel
- "He sall ascend as ane horrible grifouan.  
Him meit sall in the air ane scho dragoun.  
Thir terribill monsturis sall togiddit thrist,  
And in the cluddis get the Antichrist,  
Qwhill all the air infect of thair poysoun.  
griffin  
shall meet; female  
These; monsters; mate (birds)  
clouds begin  
While; poison
- "Undir Satans fyrie regiouen  
Symon Magus sall meit him, and Mahoun,  
And Merleyn at the mune sall him be bydand,  
And Jonet the Wedo on a busari hanse rydand,  
Of wytchis with ane wondrus garsoun.  
fiery  
moon; awaiting  
broom stick riding home  
witches; wondrous troop

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- "And syne thai sall dispend with reik and fyre,  
 And preiche in eird the Antecheistis impyre;  
 And than it sal be neir the warldis end."  
 With that this ladie did schootlie fra me wend.  
 40 Skipand and walkand wes frustrat my desyre.  
 show; smoke  
 preach on earth; empire  
 quickly  
 Sleeping and walking (i.e., entirely)
- Quhene I awyk, my dreme it wes so nyce,  
 Fra everie wicht I hid it as a vyce.  
 Quhill I hard tell be moey suthfast wy.  
 Fle wald ane abbot up into the sky  
 45 And all his feddrem maid wes at devyce.  
 ridiculous  
 person  
 Until I heard; truthful person  
 Fly would  
 feathers; with skill
- Within my hert confort I take full sone.  
 "Adew," quod I, "My deere dayis ar done.  
 Fall weill I wist to me wald never cum thirith  
 Quhill that twa moontis wer first sene in the liff,  
 50 Or quhill ane abbot flew above the moyne."  
 unhappy; over  
 prosperity  
 Until; moon; sky (firmament)  
 until; above; moon
- 52. To the Lord Treasurer**  
 [Welcome, my awin lord thesaurair]
- I thocht lang quhill sum lord come hame,<sup>1</sup>  
 Fra quhorne faine kyndnes I wald clame.  
 His name of confort I will declair.  
 Welcom, my awin lord thesaurair!  
 desired kindness I would claim  
 awin lord treasurer
- 5 Befoir all rink of this regioum,  
 Under our roy of most renoun,  
 Of all my mycht, thoscht it war mair,  
 Welcom, my awin lord thesaurair!  
 above all men  
 king  
 With; though (even if)
- Your nobill payment I did assay,  
 10 And ye hecht sone, without delay,  
 Againe in Edinburgh till repair:  
 Welcom, my awin lord thesaurair!  
 hoped to obtain  
 promised  
 to return

<sup>1</sup> I was anxious until a certain lord (the Lord Treasurer) came home

Poem 53: To the Lords of Chalker

- Ye keipit tryst so winder weill,  
I bald yow trew as oys stell.  
Neidis name your payment till dispair:  
Welcum, my awin lord thesaurair!
- Yett is a pairt I was agast,  
Or ye the narrest way had past  
Fra tous of Stirling to the air.  
Welcum, my awin lord thesaurair!
- Thane had my dyt beine all in buill,  
Had I my wage wantit quhill Yvill,  
Qahair now I sing with heart onsaire:  
Welcum, my awin lord thesaurair!
- Welcum, my benefice and my rent,  
And all the lyflett to me lent,  
Welcum, my pensoun most preclair:  
Welcum, my awin lord thesaurair!
- Welcum als heartie as I can,  
My awin dear maister, to your man,  
And to your servand singalair:  
Welcum, my awin lord thesaurair!

53. To the Lords of Chalker

- My Lordis of Chalker, pleis yow to heir  
My countreit, I sall it mak yow cleir  
But ony circumstance or sonye;  
For lefft is nether corce nor curyle  
5 Of all that I taik in the yeir.
- For reckyning of my rentis and rouames  
Yie neid not for to tyre your thowmes,  
Na for to gar your countaris clink,  
Na paper for to spend nor ink,  
10 In the nessaveing of my soumes.
- Exchequer, if it please you  
reckoning; clear to you  
Without any excuses or delays  
neither large claims nor small  
received*
- properties  
You; tire your thumbs (i.e.,办法)  
Nor to make; counters  
calculating; sums*

*The Works of William Dunbar*

	I tuik fra my lord thesautair Ane soume of money for to wair. I cannot tell yow how it is spendit, Bot weill I waitt that it is endit, 15 And that me think are compte our sair.	took (received); <i>treasurer</i> <i>A sum; sum</i> <i>knew; gone</i> <i>a painful account</i>
20	I trowit, the tyme quhen that I tuik it, That lang in burgh I could have brukit. Now the remanes ar erlh to tars — I have na greiff heir bot my purs, Quhilk wald not lie and it war leikit.	believed; received <i>enjoyed it</i> <i>easy to assemble</i> <i>proof; purse</i> <i>if it were examined</i>

54. *A Ballad of the Friar of Tengland*

	As yung Aurora with cristall haile In orient schew hir visage paile, A sweyng swyth did me assaile Oft sonis of Sathanis seid.	i.e. Dawn; <i>halo (dew drops)</i> <i>In the east; pale face</i> <i>vision quickly</i> <i>About the sons of Satan's seed</i>
5	Me thoscht a Turk of Tartary Come throw the boundis of Barbary And lay forloppin in Lumbardy Full lang in waithman weid.	<i>Had crossed the border from Barbary</i> <i>in exile</i> <i>an outlaw's clothing</i>
10	Fra baptasing for to eschew, Thair a religioun man he slew And cled him in his abet new, For he coust wryte and reid.	<i>avoid</i> <i>himself; halo</i> <i>knew how to; read</i>
15	Quhen kend was his dissimilance And all his cursit govrnance, For soi he fled and come in France, With littill of Lumbard leid.	<i>When known; impudent</i> <i>conduct</i> <i>for</i> <i>language</i>
20	To be a leiche he fenyd him thair, Quhilk moy a man nicht new evirmair, For he left nowthir seik nor sair Unslase or be lyse yeid. Vane organis he full clenely carvit, Quhen of his straik so mony starvit,	<i>physician he pretended</i> <i>regret</i> <i>neither (she) sick nor (she) sorrowful</i> <i>Unslain before he hence went</i> <i>Jugular veins; slit</i> <i>surgery; died</i>

Poem 54: A Ballad of the Friar of Tangland

- Drid he had gottin that he desarvit,  
He fled away gad sped.
- afraid  
quickly
- 25 In Scotland than the narrest way  
He come his carryng till assay.  
To sum man their it was no play,  
The preving of his sciens.  
In pottingry he wrocht grit pyne,  
30 He murdeist mony in medecyne.  
The Jew was of a grit engyne.  
And generit was of gyans.
- then; shortest  
skills to exhibit  
some men  
having  
pharmacy he caused great pain  
murdered many in (the guise of) medicine  
infidel (i.e., Jew); great ingenuity  
descended from giants
- 35 In leichecraft he was hoesecyd.  
He wald haif, for a rycht to byd,  
A haiknay and the hurt manis hyd,  
So meikle he was of myance.  
His ymis was made as ony rawchtir.  
Quhair he leit blude it was no lawchtir.  
Full mony instrument for slawchtir  
40 Was in his gardevyance.
- healing; (a) murderer  
one night's attendance  
horse; hide (i.e., the patient's skin)  
So high were his fees  
iron instruments were rough; rather  
let blood; lauging matter  
slaughter  
trunk
- He cowth gif care for laxatyve  
To gar a wicht hors want his lyve.  
Quhaevir assay wald, man or wyfe,  
Thair hippis yeid hiddi giddi.  
45 His practikis novir war put to peif  
Bot suddane deid or grit mischeif.  
He had purgations to mak a theif  
To dee without a widdi.
- could give; diarrhea  
make a strong horse die  
Whoever would try  
Their hips would shiver and shake  
Without sudden death  
widdi (hangman's noose)
- 50 Unto no Mes pressit this prelat  
For sound of sacring bell nor skellat.  
As blakmyth bruikit was his pallart  
For battering at the study.  
Thocht he come hame a new maid channous,  
55 He had dispensit with matynnis channous.  
On him come nowther stole nor fannous  
For smowking of the smydy.
- Mass hurried  
bell/bell  
blackened; face  
hammering; evil  
Though; newly-made canon  
the canonical service of matins  
neither stole nor mantle  
smoking; smoky

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- Me thocht seir fassonis he assailyeit  
 To mak the quintessance, and failyeit.  
 And quhen he saw that nocht availyeit,  
 60      A fedrem on he take,  
 And schape in Turky for to fle.  
 And quhen that he did most on he,  
 All fowill ferleit qhat he sowld be,  
 That evir did on him luke.
- many methods; attempted  
 failed  
 nothing worked  
 coat of feathers  
 prepared to fly to Turkey  
 mount on high  
 (the) birds wondered; could  
 look
- 65      Sam held he had bene Dedalus,  
 Sam the Menatair marvelus,  
 Sam Martis blaksmyth, Vulcanus,  
 And sum Saturnus kuke.  
 And evir the tuschetts at him taggit,  
 70      The rukis him rent, the ravynis him druggit,  
 The hudit crawis his hair furth ruggit.  
 The bevin he nicht not brake.
- believed  
 Minotaur  
 Mars  
 Saturn's cook  
 lapwings; pecked  
 rook tore at him; ravens begged at him  
 hooded crow; pulled  
 enjoy
- 75      The myttane and Sanct Martynis fowle  
 Wend he had bene the hornit howle,  
 Thay set aspone him with a yowle  
 And gaif him dynt for dynt.  
 The golk, the gormaw, and the gled  
 Beft him with buffettis quhill he bled,  
 The sparhawk to the spring him sped  
 80      Als fers as fyre of flynt,
- lesser birds of prey  
 thought; horned owl  
 screech  
 gave him blow for blow  
 cormorant; kite  
 boat; went
- 85      The tarsall gaif him tag for tag,  
 A stanchell hang in ilk a lug,  
 The pyot furth his penis did rug,  
 The stork strak ay but styt,  
 The bissart, bissy but rebuk,  
 Scho was so cleverus of hir cluk  
 His bawis he nicht not langer brak,  
 Scho held thame at ane hint.
- tercel (male hawk)  
 kestrel hung on each ear  
 magpie; feathers; seize  
 struck without ceasing  
 buzzard; acting without rebuke  
 piercing with her claws  
 balls (testicles); use  
 in a grip
- 90      Thik was the clad of kayis and crawis,  
 Of marleyonis, mittanis, and of mawis,
- Thick; cloud; down and cross  
 merlins, gulls

Poem 54: A Ballad of the Friar of Tangland

- That bikkrit at his bend with blawis,  
In battell him abowt.  
Thay sybbilin him with noyis and cry,  
The herd of thame raius to the sky,  
95 And evir he cryit on Fortoun, "Fy!"  
His lyfe was into drownt.
- The ja him skippit with a skryke  
And skornit him, as it was lyk.  
The egill strong at him did stryke  
100 And rawcht him morit a rownt.  
For feir uncanndly he cawkit,  
Quhill all his pennis war drownd and drawkit.  
He maid a hundredth soft all hawkit  
Benehit him with a spout.
- 105 He schewre his fiddrene that was schene,  
And slippit out of it full clene,  
And in a myre up to the eie  
Amang the glas did glyd.  
The fowlis all at the fedrem dawg  
110 As at a monster thame amang.  
Quhill all the pennis of it owtisprung  
In till the air full wyde.
- And he lay at the plange evirmair,  
Sa lang as any ravin did raire.  
115 The crawis him socht with cryis of cair  
In every schaw besyde.  
Had he neveld bene to the naikis,  
They had him revin all with thair chukis.  
There dayis in dab amang the dokis  
120 He did with dirt him hyde.
- The air was dirkit with the fowlis  
That come with yawmeris and yowlis,  
With skryking, skrymmering, and with scowlis,  
To tak him in the tyde.  
125 I walknit with the noyis and schowte,
- pecked  
noise  
die; rose  
at rok
- jay; shriek  
scorned; as was its wont  
eagle  
gave; blow  
unearthly; be defecated  
Until; feathers; drenched  
cattle; besmirched
- shed; feather coat; bright  
beg; eyes  
mud; slide  
birds; feathers; pecked
- immersed  
raven; cry
- copsie  
revealed; roots  
fern; claws  
pond; ducks
- darkened by  
shrieking; screaming; scowls  
awakened; shouts

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So hiddowin beir was me abowte.  
Sensyne I curs that cankerit rowte,  
Quhairevir I go or ryde.

*Sack [af hideour dis  
Since then; malicious crowd  
Wherever*

55. *Sir Thomas Nerry*

Now lythis of aye gentill knyght,  
Schir Thomas Nerry, wys and wycht  
And full of chevility,  
5 Quhais father was aye giand keyne,  
His mother was aye farie queyne.  
Gottin be soosery,

*listen [to the tale of]  
brave  
knightly virtue  
Whose; giant bold  
fairy queen  
by sorcery*

Ane fairar knyght nor he was aye  
On ground may nothair ryd nor gane,  
Na beire buklar nor brand;  
10 Or comis in this court, but dreid,  
He did full mony valycant deid  
In Rois and Murray land.

*A finer  
earth; nowhere ride or go  
Nor bear a shield nor sword  
Before coming; to be sure  
dreid  
Ross and Moray*

15 Fall mony catherein hes he chait,  
And cummerid mony Helland gaist  
Amang thay dally glennis.  
Of the Glen Quhettane twenti scor  
He drawe as oxin him befoir —  
This deid thocht na man kennis.

*robber; chased  
pursued; Highland ghosts  
the gloomy glens  
Clan Chattan; score  
drove  
deid though; known*

20 At feasins and brydallis upaland  
He wan the gree and the garland,  
Darsit non so on deis.  
He hes att werslings bein aye bunder,  
Yet lay his body never at under —  
He knowis giff this be leis.

*in the uplands  
won the prize  
Danced no one; dais (platform)  
wrestlings; bounded  
if this is a lie*

25 Was never wyld Robein under bewch  
Nor yet Roger of Clekniskleuch  
So bauld a berne as he;  
Gy of Gysburne, na Allan Bell,

*Robin [Hood]; bought  
bold a man*

Poem 56: *A Dance in the Queen's Chamber*

	Na Simonis soones of Qultynell	
30	At schot war never so sli.	archery; skilled
	This anterous knyght, qaharever he went,	adventurous; wherever
	At justing and at tornament	joesting
	Evermore he wan the gre;	won the price
	Was never of halff so gryt renowne	half
35	Schir Bevis the knyght of Southe Hamptowne —	
	I schrew him gif I lie.	I curse him if I lie
	Thairfoir Quacetyne was bot a hardane	rascal
	That callid him aye full plum jardane,	a brim-full pugger
	This wyse and worthie knyght.	
40	He callit him fowler than a full,	more foul; fool
	He said he was aye licheroas bull	
	That croynd baith day and nyght.	bellowed
	He wald heff maid him Curris kneff.	would have made; helper
	I pray God better his honour saiff	sire
45	Na to be lyghtleit sua.	Than; so insulted
	Yet this far furth I dar him prais:	so this easier
	He fyld never sadell in his dais,	befouled; days
	And Curry belyld twa.	Whereas; defiled two
	Qahairfoir ever at Pesche and Yull	Therefore; Easter and Yule
50	I cry him lord of evere full	every fool
	That is this regeone dwelis;	a great truth
	And verralise that war gryt ryght,	high
	For of aye by renowned knyght,	backs; but backs
	He wantis nothing bot bellis.	

56. *A Dance in the Queen's Chamber*  
[A merveilour dance myght no man see]

Sir Jhon Sinclair begowthe to dance,  
For he was new cum owt of France.  
For ony thing that he do myght  
The an fott yeid ay onrycht

began  
newly come from

one foot always went awry

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- 5 And to the tother wald nocht gree.  
Quod an, "Tak up the quenis knycht!"  
A mirrear daunce mycht na man see.  
with the other would not agree  
Said one, "Remove . . ."  
merrier
- Than cam in maistir Robert Schau —  
He leuket as he culd lern than a,  
Bot ay his an fatt did waver.  
He stackeret lyk an strummall awer  
That hopschackellit war aboin the kne.  
To seik fra Sterling to Stranawer,  
A mirrear daunce mycht na man see.  
looked like he could teach them all  
staggered; clumsy pack-horse  
hobbled was above
- 15 Than cam in the maister almaser,  
An hommilitye-jommeleye juffler.  
Lyk a stirk stackarand in the ry.  
His hippis gaff many hoddous cry.  
John Bute the fule said, "Wa es me,  
20 He is bedirtin, fyf, fy!"  
A mirrear daunce mycht na man se.  
almorer  
humbley-jammy shugger  
bullock crashing about  
near-end gave many horrible noises  
fool: Woe is me  
has befouled himself
- Than cam in Dunbar the muckar —  
On all the flare thair was nan frackar —  
And thair he dancet the dirrye dampoun.  
He heppet lyk a pillic wanton,  
For luff of Musgraeffe, men tellis me.  
He trippet qahill he tist his panton.  
A mirrear daunce mycht na man see.  
post  
none more daring  
dirty boogie (?)  
randy cock  
lure  
danced until he lost his slipper
- 25 Than cam in Maesteres Musgraeffe —  
Schou mycht heff lemit all the laeffle.  
Quhen I schau hir sa trimlyc dance,  
Hir guid convey and contenance.  
Than for hir saek I wisitt to be  
The grytast erle or dsk in France.  
35 A mirrear daunce mycht na man see.  
Maestress Musgrave  
She; taught; rest  
tame; neatly  
goodly bearing  
sake I wished  
greatest
- Than cam in dame Desoneboir —  
God waett gif that schou leuket sowr.  
Schou maid sic morgewawnis with hir hippis,  
God knows if she looked sour  
made such grotesque movements

Poem 57: Of James Dog

- For lachtier nain mycht hald thair lippis. laughter noise  
 40 Qshen schou was danceand bisselye,  
 An blast of wind son fra hir slippis.  
 A mirrear dance mycht na man se.
- Qshen thair was cum in fyve or sax. six  
 The quenis Dog begrowth to rao,  
 45 And of his band he maid a breed  
 And to the dancing soin he him med.  
 Qshou mastevlyk abowt yeid he!  
 He stinckett lyk a tyk, sum said.  
 A mirrear dance mycht na man see.

57. Of James Dog  
 [Madame, ye heff a dangerous dog]

- The wardripper of Venus boure,  
 To giff a doublett he is als doure  
 As it war of ase fatt syll frog:  
 Madame, ye heff a dangerous dog. wardrobe-keeper; Venus' bower  
                           give; reluctant  
                           full-length frock  
                           have
- 5 Qshen that I schawe to him your markis,  
 He turnis to me again and barkis  
 As he war wirriand ayc hog:  
 Madame, ye heff a dangerous dog. marks [of authorization]  
                           As if he were nipping at
- 10 Qshen that I schawe to him your wrytin,  
 He girtis that I am red for bytin ---  
 I wald he had ase havye clog:  
 Madame, ye heff an dangerous dog. written [approvals]  
                           marks; fearful of being bitten  
                           with; a heavy restraint
- 15 Qshen that I speik till him freindlyk,  
 He barkis lyk an middling tyk  
 War chassand cattell throu a bog:  
 Madam, ye heff a dangerous dog. mongrel  
                           /That/ war chasing
- He is ase mastive, mekle of mycht,  
 To keip your wardripppe over nyght mastiff great

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- 20 Fra the grytt sowdan Gog Magog: great rulun  
Madam, ye heff a dangerous dog.
- He is ouer mekle to be your mesan.  
Madam, I red you, get a less an.  
His gang garris all your chalmeris scheg  
Madam, ye heff a dangerous dog.
- too large; *lap dog*  
*advise; smaller one*  
*causes your whole chamber to shake*
58. *Of the Aforesaid James Dog*  
[*He is na dog, he is a lam*]
- O gracious Princes, guid and fair,  
Do weill to James, your wardraipair, Princess  
Qubais faythfull bruder maist freind I am:  
He is na dog, he is a lam.
- Treat well; *wardrobe-keeper*  
*brother most friendly*  
*lamb*
- 5 Thocht I in balleit did with him bounde,  
In malice spack I nevir an woord.  
Bot all, my darse, to do you garn:  
He is na dog, he is a lam.
- Thought; *poem; jest*  
*spoke*  
*to amuse you*
- 10 Your hienes can nocht gett ane meter  
To keip your wardrobe, nor discreter  
To rewle your robbis and dres the sare:  
He is na dog, he is a lam.
- highness; *one more able*  
*care for the same*
- 15 The wyff that he had in his innis,  
That with the taengis wald brack his schannis,  
I wald schou downset war in a dam:  
He is na dog, he is a lam.
- place of dwelling  
fire tongs  
mill pond
- 20 The wyff that wald him kackald muk,  
I wald schou war, bayth syd and back,  
Weill batteret with ane barrou traen:  
He is na dog, he is an lam.
- make (of) cuckold of him  
I wish she were; in all ways  
beaten; *barrow handle*
- He hes sa weill dein me obey  
In till all thing, thairfair I pray
- wherefore

Poem 59: Epitaph for Donald Oure

That nevir dolour mak him drame: sorrow; sad  
He is na dog, he is a lam.

59. Epitaph for Donald Oure

- In vice most vices he excells.  
That with the vice of tressone nello.      *deceit*  
    Thocht he remissoun      *Though he pardon*  
    Haif for prodissoun.      *Has received/for [his] treachery*  
    Schame and suspisoun  
    Ay with him dwellis.      *Ever*
- And he evir odious as ane owle,  
The falt so filthy is and fowle:      *fiend*  
    Horrible to natour      *nature*  
    Is ane tratour,  
    As feind in fratour      *fiend; abbey dining hall*  
    Undir a cowle.      *monk's hooded robe*
- Qwha is a tratour or ane theif  
Upoun himselff tarnis the mischeif.      *Whoever*  
    His frawdfall wylis      *returns the harm*  
    Himself begylis,      *deceitful wiles*  
    As in the Iles      *Western Isles*  
    Is now a peiff.      *evident*
- The fell, strong tratour, Donald Owyer,  
Mair falsett hes nor udir fowyr.      *cruel, guilty*  
    Round ylis and seys      *falsehood has than any four others*  
    In his supplein,      *isles and seas*  
    On gallow treis      *Upon his supporters (?)*  
    Now he dois glowir.      *the gallows*  
                                *does stare*
- Falsett no feit hes nor deffence  
By power, practik, nor puscence.  
    Thocht it fra licht  
    Be smord with slicht,      *Falsehood has no feet [to stand on]*  
                                *By means of: cunning; armed force*  
                                *hidden*

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	God schawis the richt With soir vengence.	extreme
30	Of the fals fox dissimulatour Kynd hes all reffar, theiff, and tratour: Eftir respyt To wirk dispyt	Nature; robber
35	Moir appetyt He hes of natour.	To engage in malicious acts Greater by nature
40	War the fox tane a thowsand fawd And grace him gevis als oft for fawd, War he on plane All war in vane,	Were; captured a thousand times <i>If he</i> were on the plain would be in vain
	Frome hennis agane Micht non him hawd.	hens bold
45	The murtherer ay murthour mai, And evir quhill he be slane he slais. Wyvin thus makis mokkis, Spynnand on rokkis:	murder commits always until he be slain he slays engage in scornful speech <i>While</i> spinning on their distaff
	Ay ryvnis the fox Quhill he fute hais.	Ever runs While he has feet

60. *A Complaint against Mure*

	Schir, I complaine of injuris: A refing soene of takyng Muris Hes magellit my making throw his malis And present it into yowr palis.	oblivious son of raving Moors mangled; poetry; malice presented it in your palace
5	Bot sen he gles with me to plead, I sall him knawin mak byne to Calis, Bot gif yowr benes it remeid.	since he wishes; debate make known from here to Calais Unless your highness redresser it
10	That fulle dismemberit hes my meter And poysored it with strang salper, With rycht defamous speiche of lordis, Quhilk with my colloaris all discordis,	fool very insulting poetic devices

Poem 61: Sweet Rose of Virtue

Quhois crewall slander servis ded,  
And in my name all leis recordis.  
Your grace beseik I of remeid.

deserves the death penalty  
*his*  
*I beg for redress*

- 15 He has indorsit myn indyting  
With versis of his awin hand wryting.  
Quhairin baithe sclander is and tressoun,  
Of ane wod fuill far owt of seasoun,  
He wantis nocht bot a roundit heid,  
20 For he has tynt baith wit and resoun.  
Your grace beseik I of remeid.

written on top of my poetry

*Like a crazy fool; not  
lacks only a close-cropped head*

*but*

- 25 Punish  
make him carry a bauble  
/Soif that: Dumfries fool  
welcome in preparation for: Tale  
attired  
youth; bull  
Punes him for his deid culpable,  
Or gar deliver him a bable  
That Cuddy Rug, the Drumfres faill,  
May him resave agane this Yuill,  
All roundit into yellow and reid,  
That ladis may bait hym lyk a buill —  
For that to me war sum remeid.

61. Sweet Rose of Virtue

Sweit rois of vertew and of gentilnes,  
Delytsum lyllie of everie lustynes,  
Richest in boontie and in bewtie cleir  
And everie vertew that is deir,  
5 Except onlie that ye are mercyles.

Delightful; levellous  
goodness; beauty

- 10 private garden; enter  
hue (color)  
white and red; most pleasant  
flourishing  
leaf; none of rue  
Into your garthe this day I did persew.  
Thair saw I floweris that fresche wer of hew,  
Baithe quhyte and rid, moist lusty wer to seyne,  
And halvern herbis upone stalkis grene,  
Vit leif nor flour fynd could I nane of rew.

private garden; enter  
hue (color)  
white and red; most pleasant  
flourishing  
leaf; none of rue

I dout that Mercbe with his caild blastis keyne  
Hes slane this gentill herbe that I of mene,  
Quhois petewous deithe dois to my hart sic paine

fear  
of which I speal  
such paine

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- 15 That I wald mak to plant his rute agane,  
So that confortand his levis unto me bene.

*root*

*comforting; might be*

*62. Beauty and the Prisoner*

- See that I am a presoneir  
Till hir that fairest is and best,  
I me command fra yeir till yeir  
Intill hir bandoun for to rest.  
5 I govit on that gudliest:  
So lang to luk I tak laseir,  
Quhill I wes tane withouttin test  
And led furth as a presoneir.
- Hir Sweit Having and Fresche Bewte  
Hes wondit me but swerd or lance.  
With thame to go comandit me  
Ontill the Castell of Pennance.  
I said, "Is this your govircance,  
To tak men for thair huking heir?"  
15 Fresche Bewte said, "Ya, schir, perchance  
Ye be my ladeis presoneir."
- Thai had me bundin to the get  
Quhair Strangenes had bene portar ay,  
And in deliverit me thairat.  
20 And in thir termis can thai say:  
"Do wait and lat him nocht away."  
Quo Strangenes unto the porneir,  
"Ontill my lady, I dar lay,  
Ye be to pure a presoneir."
- Thai kest me in a dep dangerous  
And fetterit me but lok or cheyne.  
The capitane, hecht Comparesone,  
To lake on me he thecht greit dreyne.  
Thecht I wes wo I durst nocht pleyne,  
30 For he had fetterit mony a feit.

Since  
To; fairest  
myself entrust  
power; remain  
gazed; goodliest one  
*[my] leisure*

*Until: captured without physical contact*

*Attractive Manner*  
*wounded; without sword*

*custom*  
*seize; looking here*  
*Ten; by chance*

*brought me bound to the gate*  
*Disdain; [the] porter ever*

*these words did they say*  
*Make him stay; not escape*  
*Said*  
*Unto; assert*  
*too poor*

*cast*  
*without lock or chain*  
*called*  
*[of great insult]*  
*Although I was sad I dared not complain*  
*many a worthy adversary*

Poem 62: Beauty and the Prisoner

With petous voce thus cuth I scne,  
"Wo is a wofall presoneir." could I say

- Langour wes weche upoun the wall,  
That nevir slepit bot evir wouke. Indifference; watchman  
35 Scorne wes boundour in the hall  
And oft on me his babill schuke,  
Lukand with moray a dengerous lake.  
"Quhat is he yone that methis us neir?  
Ye be no townage, be this buke,  
40 To be my ladeis presoneir."  
  
 Gud Hous rownit in my air  
And had me baldlie breve a bill;  
With Lawlines he sold it beir,  
With Fair Service send it hir till.  
45 I wouk and wret hir all my will.  
Fair Service fur withouttin feir,  
Sayand till hir with wirdis still,  
"Haif pety of your presoneir."  
  
 Than Lawlines to Petie went  
50 And said till hir in termis schort,  
"Lat we yone presoneir be schent,  
Will no man do to us support.  
Gar lay ane sege unto yone foet."  
Than Petie said, "I sall appear."  
55 Thocht sayis, "I hecht, coim I ourthort,  
I houp to lowx the presoneir."  
  
 Thus to bannell thai war arreyit all  
And ay the vawant kepit Thocht.  
Last bur the bennor to the wall,  
60 And Bissines the grit gyn brocht.  
Skorne cryis out, sayis, "Wald ye ocht?"  
Last sayis, "We wald haif ent're heir."  
Comparisone sayis, "That is for nocht.  
Ye will nocht wyn the presoneir."
- Good Hope whispered; ear  
boldly write a letter  
Humility; should it carry  
awakened and wrote to her; desire  
went without fear  
soft word  
"Have pity on"
- Pity  
brief  
(if) we allow; (to) be destroyed  
(Then) no man will support us  
Let us make a siege  
appear there, toaf  
pledge; I come across  
hope to release
- arranged  
always in the vanguard remained  
Desire bore the banner  
Fogar the great siege engine brought  
What do you want?  
have entry here  
(all) for naught

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- 65 Thai thairin schup for to defend,  
And thai thairfurther sailyeit are hour.  
Than Bissines the grit gyn bend,  
Straik down the top of the fair tour.  
Comparisone began to lour  
70 And cryit futh, "I yow requeir  
Soft and fair and do favour,  
And tak to yow the presoneir."  
  
Thai fyrit the getis deliverly  
With faggottis wer grit and huge,  
75 And Strangenes, qahair that he did ly,  
Wes brent into the porter luge.  
Lustely they lakin bot a juge,  
Sik strakis and stychling wes on stair.<sup>1</sup>  
The semeliest wes maid assege,  
80 To qahome that he wes peesonieir.  
  
Throucht Skornes nos thai put a prik,  
This he wes banisht and gat a biek.  
Comparisone wes erlit quik,  
And Langour lap and brak his nek.  
85 Thai sailyeit fast, all the fek.  
Lust chasit my ladeis chalmirleir;  
God Fame wes drownit in a sek:  
Thus ransontit thai the presoneir.  
  
Fra Sklandir hard Lust had undone  
90 His ensemelis, he him aganis  
Assemblit are semely sort fall sene  
And rais and rowttit all the planis.  
His cusing in the court remanis,  
Bot jalous folkis and grangleiris.  
95 And fals Irvy, that nothing latis,  
Blew out on Lavis presoneir.
- prepared  
assailed  
great siege engine drove  
forenoon  
gravel  
*I request of you*  
*favorable treatment (?)*  
*/will bring to you*
- set fire to the gates immediately  
bundles of sticks [that] were  
where he lay  
*burned in the porter's lodge*  
*Fiercely they fought without a judge*
- The semeliest [one] was nowf besieged*
- Through Scorn's nose; stab wound  
Thus he was banished; scar  
quickly put to earth (i.e., killed)  
leaped and broke his neck  
field; remainder  
chased; chambermaid  
*drowned in a sack*  
*freed*
- After Slander heard; defeated*
- band  
rose up and rode all over the plains  
concede  
scandalmongers  
conceal  
blabbed about

<sup>1</sup> Such strikings and struglings were on [the] stair

Poem 63: To a Lady

- Syne Matremony, that nobilit king,  
Was grevit and gadderit aye grit ost,  
And all enermite, without lesing.  
Then  
100 Chest Sklander to the west se cost.  
Than wes he and his linege lost,  
And Matremony, withouttin weir,  
entirely armed, without falsehood (i.e., assuredly)  
The band of freindschipe hes indost  
Chased, sea coast  
Betusix Bewty and the presoneir.  
Then  
without *faf* doubt  
endorsed
- 105 Be that of eild wes God Farnis air  
And cumyne to continuacion,  
And to the court maid his repair  
Qwhair Matremony than woer the crowne.  
By then of age was Good Fame's heir  
He gat aye confirmacion,  
had come into [his] inheritance  
110 All that his modir aucht but weir,  
And haid still, as it wes resonc,  
With Bewty and the presoneir.  
brought himself  
wore  
*mother possessed without doubt*  
*And still abides, as is proper*

63. To a Lady

- My hertis treasure and swete assured fo,  
The finale endar of my lyfe forever,  
The cresell breakar of my hart in tuo,  
To go to deathe this I deseruit never.  
heart's; undoubted for  
sheoly  
5 O man slayar, qshill saule and life dissever,  
Stynt of your slaunchir, allace, your man am I,  
A thousand tymes that doin yow mercy cry.  
which; separate  
Cease; slaughter
- Have mercie, Iuf, have mercie, ladie bricht,  
Qwhat have I wrocht aganis your womanheid  
10 That ye sold mardir me, a saikles wicht,  
Trespassing never to yow in word nor deed?  
That ye coenant thairto, O God forbid!  
love  
done; womanhood  
should; an innocent man  
deed
- Leif creuelte and saif your man, for schame,  
Or throucht the world quytte losit is your name.  
Leave; save  
throughout; quite injured
- 15 My deathe chasis my lyfe so besalie  
That wary is my goist to fle so fast.  
vigorously  
weary; spirit

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- Sic deidlie dwawmes so mischeifaislie  
Anc handrithe tymes hes my haire overpast.  
Me think my spreit ryans away full gast,  
20 Beseikand grace on kneis yow befoir,  
Or that your man be lost for evermoir.
- Behald my wod, intollerabill pane,  
Forevermoir quhilk sal be my dampnage.  
Quhy undir traist your man thus have ye slane?  
25 Lo, deithe is in my breist with furious rage.  
Quhilk may no balme noe tryacle assauge  
Bot your mercie, for lack of quhilk I de.  
Allace, quhair is your womanlie petie?
- Behald my deidlie passioun dolorous,  
30 Behald my hiddous hew and wo, allace.  
Behald my mayne and murning mervalous,  
With sorrowfull teris falling frose my face.  
Rewthe, laif, is nocht, helpe ye not in this cace,  
For how could ony gentill hart indure  
35 To se this sycht on ony creature?
- Quhyte dov, quhair is your sobir humilnes?  
Sweete gentill tartour, quhair is your pete went?  
Quhair is your rewthe, the frute of nobilnes,  
40 Of womanheid the tresour and the rent?  
Mercie is never put out of meik intent,  
Nor out of gentill hart is fundin petie,  
Sen mercyles may no weyght nobill be.
- Into my mynd I sail you mercye cry  
Quhone that my young sail fail me to speik,  
45 And quhill that Nature me my sycht deny,  
And quhill my eue for pane inclose and steik,  
And quhill the deth my hart in soundir breik,  
And quhill my mynd may think and young may stir —  
And syn, fair weill, my harts lady deir!
- Such deadly swoons; harmfully experienced spirit rum; aghast Beseeching; know Before
- wild, intolerable pain which shall be my injury Why under [your] safe-keeping drug ointment; medicine Without; for lack of which I die pity
- hue (color) grief; mourning tears pity; unless, [if] you help not should see
- White dove; humility turtle dove compassion; fruit wealth absent from gentle thoughts Since; person
- When; to speak for me while; right eye; close up and shut under breaks until; more And then, farewell

Poem 64: Good Counsel for Lovers

64. Good Counsel for Lovers

[Be secret, trew, increasing of your name]

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Be ye ase luvar, think ye nocth ye said<br>Be weill advysit in your governing?<br>Be ye nocth sa, it will on you be taold.<br>Be war thairwith for dreid of misdemyng.<br>5<br>Be nocth a wneche nor skerche in your spending,<br>Be layth alway to do amis or schame,<br>Be rewlit ryght and keip this doctring:<br>Be secret, trew, increasing of your name.      | If you are a lover; not; should<br>behavior<br>If you are not, about you be said<br>fear of false judgement<br>mixer nor stingy<br>louth<br>ruled rightly   |
| Be ye ase lear, that is went of all.<br>10<br>Be ye ase trastlar, that I hald als evill.<br>Be ye ase janclar and ye fra vertew falt,<br>Be nevirmar onto thr vices thrall.<br>Be now and ay the maistir of your will,<br>Be nevir he that lesing sall proclaim,<br>15<br>Be nocth of langage quhair ye said be still:<br>Be secret, trew, increasing of your name. | far<br>artle-tell<br>scandal-monger<br>to these vices [af] slave<br><br>falsehood<br>be not a talker when   |
| Be nocth abasit for no wicket tang.<br>Be nocth sa set, as I haif said yow heir,<br>Be nocth sa lerge unto thr sawis sang,<br>20<br>Be nocth our proud, thinkand ye haif no peir,<br>Be ye so wyis that uderis at yow leir,<br>Be nevir he to sklander nor defame,<br>Be of your lufe no prechour as a freir:<br>Be secret, trew, increasing of your name.          | dismayed because of wicked tangens<br>disposed; have told you before<br>so free in spouting these wise sayings<br>overly proud; have no equal<br>others from you learn<br><br>proclaimer like a friar |

65. The Golden Targe

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Ryght as the stern of day begouth to schyne,<br>Quhen gone to bed war Vesper and Lucyne,<br>I raise and by a rosere did me rest.<br>Up sprang the goldyn candill matutyne<br>5<br>With clere deputit bernes cristallyne<br>Gladling the mery foulis in thair nest. | star; began<br>were the evening star and moon<br>arose; a rose bush; recline<br>of the morning<br>purified beams<br>birds |
|--|---|

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- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
|    | Or Phebus was in purpur cape revest<br>Up raise the lark, the hevyns memstrale fyne,<br>In May intill a morow myrrifuller.  | Before; purple; clothed<br>upon a most mirthful moore                      |
| 10 | Full angel-like thir birdis sang thair houris<br>Within thair courtyms grene into thair bours<br>Apparalit quhite and rede wyth blomes saete;<br>Anamalit was the felde wyth all colouris.<br>The perly droppis schake in silvir schouris,                    | these<br>Behind; certain<br>blossoms river                                 |
| 15 | Quhill all in balme did branch and levis flete.<br>To part fra Phebus did Aurora grete —<br>Hir cristall teris I saw hyng on the flouris,<br>Quhilk he for lufe all drank up wyth his hete.   | Enameled; field<br>showers<br>balm (i.e., dewdrop); flow<br>weep           |
| 20 | For mirth of May wyth skippis and wyth hoppis<br>The birdis sang upon the tender croppis<br>With curioose note, as Venus chapell clerkis.<br>The rosis yong, new spreading of thair knopis.<br>War powderit brycht with hevinly beriall droppis               | plants<br>artful notes<br>buds<br>Were<br>glowing                          |
| 25 | Throu bernes rede brysing as raby sperkis.<br>The skyes sang for schouting of the larkis,<br>The purpur hevyn, ouscailit in silvir sloppis,<br>Ourgilt the treis branchis, lef, and barkis.   | resounded<br>overlaid; streaks<br>Gilded                                   |
| 30 | Doun throu the ryce a ryvir ran wyth streynys<br>So lustily agayn thai lykand lemyns<br>That all the lake as lamp did lense of licht,<br>Quhilk schadowit all about wyth twynkling glemis.  | glade<br>lovely; those pleasing gloams<br>lake (i.e., water); shine        |
| 35 | The bewis bathit war in secund bemyss<br>Throu the reflex of Phebus visage brycht.<br>On every syde the hegies raise on hicht,<br>The bank was grene, the bruke was full of bremys,   | boughs<br>reflection; face<br>hedges; up high<br>brook; brooms (corps)     |
| 40 | The stanneris clere as stem in frosty nyght.<br>The cristall air, the sapher firmament,<br>The ruby skyes of the orient,<br>Kest beriall bernes on emerant bewis grene.<br>The rosy garth, depaynt and redolent,<br>With purpur, azure, gold, and goulis gent | stars<br>sapphire<br>Cast; boughs<br>garden, decorated and fragrant<br>red |

Poem 65: *The Golden Targe*

- Arayed was by Dame Flora, the quene,  
So nobily that joy was for to sene  
The roch agayn the rivir resplendent.  
45 As low eslumynit all the leves schene. clif  
flame illuminated
- Quhat throu the mery foylys armory  
And thou the ryveris sooun ryght ran me by,  
On Florais mantill I slepit as I lay:  
50 Quhare sene into my dremes fantasy  
I saw approach agayn the orient sky  
A saill als quhite as blossom upon spray,  
Wyth meese of gold brycht as the stern of day,  
Quhilk tendit to the land full lastily,  
As falcons swift desyrouse of his pray. Because of: harmony  
river's sound  
against: eastern  
as white  
top-castle; star  
moved toward: eagerly
- 55 And hand on bured onto the blomyt medis  
Amang the grene rispis and the redis  
Arrivit sche, quhar fro anon thare landis  
Ane hundredth ladyes, lasty into wedis,  
Als fresh as flouris that in May up spredis,  
60 In kirtillis grene, withoutyn kell or bandis.  
Thair brycht hairis haung gletong on the strandis  
In tressis clere, wypgit wyth goldyn thredis,  
Wyth pappis quhite and trydlin small as wardis. close beside the flowery meadow  
sedge and the reeds  
from which they disembarked  
arrayed in lovely clothing
- 65 Discrive I wald, bot quho coad wele endyte  
How all the feldis wyth thai lilies quhite  
Depaynt waz brycht, quhilk to the hevyn did glete?  
Noucht thou, Omer, als fair as thou coad wryte,  
For all thine ornate stilis so perfyte.  
70 Nor yit thou, Tullius, quheis lippis swete  
Of rethorike did into termes flote.  
Your aureate tongis both bene all to lyte  
For to compile that paradise complete. would: who; fully tell  
those  
shine  
Not; Homer  
Marcus Tullius Cicero  
abound  
too insufficient  
portray
- 75 Thare saw I Nature and Venus, quene and quene,  
The fresch Aurora and Lady Flora schene,  
Juno, Appollo, and Proserpyna,  
Dyane, the goddesse chaste of woddis grene, queen  
bright

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- My Lady Cleo, that help of makaris bene,  
Thotes, Pallas, and prudent Minerva,  
Fair Seynit Fortune, and lemand Lucina.  
80 This mychti quenis in crounis mychti be sene  
Wyth bermys blith, bricht as Luciferia.
- poets is  
dissembling; gleaming  
These  
joyous beams
- There saw I May, of myrthfull monethis quene,  
Betwix April and June hir sistir schene,  
Within the gardyn walking up and down,  
85 Quham of the foulis gladdith all bedene.  
Scho was full tender in hir yeris grene.  
There saw I Nature present hir a goode  
Rich to behald and nobil of renoun.  
90 Of evry hew under the hevin that bene,  
Depaynt and broud be gude proporcious.
- her sisters bright  
greatly  
in her green youthfulness  
worth  
color; exorn  
*Decorated and embroidered*
- Fall lustily thir ladyes all in fere  
Enterit within this park of most plesere,  
Quhare that I lay ourhelit wyth levis rook.  
The mery foulis blisfulliest of chere  
95 Salust Nature, me thought, on thair mansere,  
And evry biome on branch and eke on booke  
Openyt and spred thair balmy levis dorek.  
Fall low enclynyng to thair quene so cleve  
Quham of thair noble scorning thay thorke.
- joyously; all together  
covered by thick leaves  
Welcomed  
also on hand  
Opened; dewy leaves  
hawing  
nourishing
- Syne to Dame Flora on the samyn wyse  
Thay salase and thay thank a thousand tyse,  
And to Dame Venus, lufis mychti quene,  
Thay sang ballottis in lufe, as was the gyse,  
With amourose notis lusty to devise  
100 As thay that had lufe in thair hertis grene.  
Thair horly throtis opnyt fro the splene  
With werblis souete did perse the hevinly skyes,  
Quhill loud resownyt the firmament serene.
- Then; same manner  
greeted; times  
love's  
songs of love; fashion  
green (i.e., fresh)  
heart  
warbling sweet; pierce  
While loudly resonaded
- Anothir court there saw I consequent  
110 Cupide the king, wyth bow in hand ybent  
And dredfall arowis grundyn schuep and square.
- following

Poem 65: *The Golden Targe*

- There saw I Mars the god armypotent,  
Aufall and sterne, strong and corpulent.  
There saw I crabbit Saturn, ald and haire —  
115 His luke was lyke for to perturb the aise.  
There was Mercurius, wise and eloquent,  
Of rethorike that fand the flouris flare.
- warlike  
muscular  
ill-tempered, hoary  
glance  
*founded the flowers (i.e., ornaments)*
- There was the god of gardingis, Priapus,  
There was the god of wildernes, Phanus,  
120 And Janus, god of entree delytable.  
There was the god of fluidis, Neptunus,  
There was the god of wyndis, Eolus,  
With variand luke ryght lyke a lord unstable.  
There was Bacus, the gladder of the table,  
125 There was Pluto, the elrich incubus,  
In cloke of grene — his court usit no sable —
- gardens  
delightful entry  
(the) seas  
changeable looks  
elfish  
black
- And eviry one of thir in grene arrayit.  
On harp or lute full merily thai playit.  
And sang balettis with mighty notis clere.  
130 Ladys to dance full soberly assayit,  
Endlang the lusty ryvir so thai mayit.  
Thair observance ryght hevynly was to here.  
Thus crap I throu the levis and drew nere  
Quhare that I was rychi sudaynly affrayt,  
135 All throu a luke quhilk I have boucht full dere.
- them: arrayed  
performed  
Along  
bear  
creep  
frightened
- And schortly for to speoke, be lufis quene  
I was aspyit. Scho bud hir archearis kene  
Go me arrest, and thay no tyme delayit.  
Than ladyes fair lete fall thair mantillis grene,  
140 With bowis big in tressit hairis schene  
All sudaynly thay had a felde arrayit.  
And yit ryght gretly was I soucht affrayit,  
The party was so plesand for to sene,  
A wonder lusty bikkir me assayit.
- by love's  
archers  
strong bows of braided hair  
battle formation assumed  
afraid  
pleasing to look upon  
wondrous assault assailed me
- 145 And first of all with bow in hand ybent  
Come Dame Beautee, ryght as scho wald me schent.
- destroy

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- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 150 | Syne folowit all hir damesclis yfere,<br>With mony diverse aufall instrument.<br>Unto the pres Fair Having wylt hir west,<br>Fyne Portraiture, Plesance, and Lusty Chere.         | Then; together<br>like war-like Mars<br>knight   |
| 155 | Syne tender Youth come wylt hir virgyns yng.<br>Grene Innocence, and schamefull Abasing.<br>And quaking Dredle wylt humble obedience.<br>The goldyn targe harmyt thay nothing.    | There; young<br>shy Bashfulness<br>trembling Timidness<br>they harmed not at all<br>was not yet present<br>do a violent deed |
| 160 | Curage in thame was nosaught begonne to spring,<br>Full sore thay dred to done a violence,<br>Sute Womanhede I saw cum in presence —<br>Of artilye a world sche did in being.     | artillery: world ( <i>i.e.</i> , a large amount)   |
| 165 | Sche led wylt hir Narture and Lawlynes,<br>Contencence, Pacience, Gude Farse, and Stedfastnes,<br>Discrecion, Gentrie, and Considerance,<br>Levefull Company, and Honest Besynes, | Humility<br>Purity<br>Gentility; Thoughtfulness<br>Companionship; Activities   |
| 170 | Besigne Luke, Mylde Chere, and Sobimes:<br>All thir bare ganycia to do me grevance.<br>Bot Reson bare the targe wylt sik constance,<br>Thair scharp assayes mycht do no dares     | All these bore weapons<br>held the shield; such<br>attacks; harm<br>military might   |
| 175 | To me, for all thair aufull ordynance,<br>Unto the pres persewit Hie Degree:<br>Hir folowit ay Estate and Dignitee,<br>Comparisoun, Honour, and Noble Array,                      | Desire<br>Generosity   |
| 180 | Will, Wantomes, Resoun, and Libertee,<br>Richesse, Fredome, and eke Nobilitee.<br>Wit ye thay did thair baser hye display.<br>A cloud of arowis as hayle schour lousit thay,      | hail shower they loosed<br>until used up   |
|     | Syne went abak reboytit of thair pray.  | Then; deprived   |

Poem 65: *The Golden Targe*

- Quhen Venus had persavit this rebute,  
 Dissymilance scho bad go mak persute  
 At all powerte to perse the goldyn targe;  
 And scho, that was of doublines the rute,  
 185 Askit hir choise of archeris in refute.  
 Venus the best bad hir go wale at large.  
 Scho take Presence, plicht anker of the barge,  
 And Fair Callyng, that wele a flayn couyd schute,  
 And Cherising for to complete hir charge.
- Dame Hamelynes scho take in company,  
 That hardy was and hende in archery,  
 And broUGHT Dame Beautee to the felde agayn  
 With all the choise of Venus chevalry.  
 Thay come and bikkerit unabashedly —  
 190 The schour of arowis rappit on as rays.  
 Perilouse Presence, that mosy syre has slayn,  
 The bataill broUGHT on bordour haed us by.  
 The salt was all the sarar, suth to sayn.
- Thik was the schote of grandyn darts kene,  
 Bot Resoun, with the sceld of gold so schene,  
 Warly defendit qahosoevir assayit.  
 The auffall stoure he manly did sustene.  
 Quhill Presence kest a pulder in his eue,  
 200 And than as drunkyn man he all forvayit.  
 Quhen he was blynd, the fule wyth him thay playit  
 And bayyst hym amang the bewis grene.  
 That sory sicht me sudsynly affrayit.
- Thus was I woundit to the deth wele nere,  
 And yoldyn as a wofall prisonnere  
 210 To Lady Beautee in a moment space.  
 Me thought scho semyt lustier of chere  
 (After that Resoun tynt had his eyne cleene)  
 Than of before, and lusfiare of face.  
 Quhy was thou blynsdit, Resoun, quhi, allace?  
 215 And gert ase hell my paradise appere,  
 And mercy seme quhate that I fand no grace.
- repulse  
 ordered; permit  
 Wile; pierce  
 the root of deceitfulness  
 for protection  
 choose at will  
 [the] main anchor  
 arrow
- Familiarity  
 skilful
- choicest of Venus' knights  
 attacked unabashedly  
 fell like rain  
 many [of] men  
 on the field close by  
 assault; more fierce, rash
- awful attack; embore  
 Until; cast; powder; eyes  
 mis-use  
 the fool  
 banished; brought
- takes
- more lively in manner  
 had lust  
 livelier  
 Why  
 made  
 found

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- Disymulanc was besy me to sile,  
And Fair Calling did oft apon me smyle,  
And Cherising me fed wyth wordis fair.  
*assail*
- 220 New Acquynstance embracit me a quhile  
And favouryt me, quhill men mycht go a myle,  
Syne take hir leve, I saw hir nevimate.  
Than saw I Dangere toward me repair.  
I coud eschew hir presence be no wyle,  
225 On syde scho lakit wyth aне frensyf fare.  
*Then  
approach  
could avoid; by no means  
in a disdainful manner*
- And at the last Departing coud hir dresse,  
And me dellyverit unto Hevynesse  
For to remayne, and scho in cure me take:  
Be this the lord of wyndis with wodenes,  
230 God Eolus, his bugill blew I gesse.  
That with the blast the levis all toschake.  
And sudaynly in the space of a luke  
All was hyne went — thare was bot wildernes,  
Thare was no more bot birdis, bank, and brake.  
*presented herself  
control  
And then; fierceness  
leaves all shook  
glance  
gone*
- 235 In twynklyng of aye eye to schip tha went,  
And swyth up saile unto the top tha stent,  
And with swift course stour the flude tha frak.  
Tha fyrst gunnis with powder violent  
Till that the reke raise to the firmament.  
240 The rochis all resowryt wyth the rak,  
For rede it semyt that the raynbow brak.  
Wyth spirit affrayde apon my fete I spent  
Amang the clewis, so carefull was the crak.  
*quickly; spread  
upon the sea they fled  
fire gun  
smoke rose  
cliff; racket  
Because of the dim  
feet I leapt  
crag; terrible*
- 245 And as I did awake of my sweyng,  
The joyfall birdis merrily did syng  
For myrth of Phebus tender bernes schene.  
Suete war the vapcaris, soft the morowing.  
Halesum the vale depaynt wyth flouris yng,  
The air attempepit, sobir, and amese.  
250 In quhite and rede was all the feidle besene  
Throu Naturis nobil fresch anamalyng  
In mirthfull May, of eviry moneth quene.  
*from my dream  
were the maid  
Freshly [was]  
temperate; mild; pleasant  
enameling*

Poem 66: *The Merle and the Nightingale*

	O reverend Chaucere, rose of rethoris all, As in oure tong are flour imperiall	rhetoricians tongue
255	That raise in Britane, evir quho redis ryche, Thou beris of makaris the triumph riall, Thy fresh anamalit termes celicall This mater cood illumynit hause full brycht. Was thou noucht of oure Inglysch all the lyght,	bear of poets; royal celestial illuminated English Surpassing
260	Surmounting evry tong terrestriall, Alls fer as Mayes morow dois mydnycht?	
	O mortall Gower and Ludgate lauteate, Your sagurit lippis and tongis aureate Bene to oure eris cause of grete delyte.	eloquent sugared lips; golden breath; ears; delight
265	Your angel mouthis most mellifluate Oure rude langage has clere illumynate, And fair ourgilt oure speech that imperfyte Stode or your goldyn pennis schape to write.	clearly illuminated gilded Stood before isle
270	This ile before was bare and desolate Of rethorike or lusty fresh endyte.	poetry
	Thou lytill quir, be evir obedient, Humble, subject, and symple of erent Before the face of evry connyng wicht. I knew quhat thou of rethorike hes spent.	book modest skillful person expended
275	Of all hir lusty rosis redolent Is non into thy garland sett on hicht. Eschame tharof and draw thee out of sicht. Rade is thy wede, disteynit, bare, and rent;	roses fragrant
	Wele aucht thou be aferit of the licht.	<i>Be shame-faced</i> clothing; stained; torn ought; afraid

66. *The Merle and the Nightingale*

	In May as that Aerota did upspring With cristall eyc chasing the chuddis sable, I hard a merle with mirry notis sing A sang of lufe with voce ryght confortable,	the Dawn eyes; the dark clouds
5	Agane the orient bennis amiable Upon a blisfull brenche of lawry grene.	heard pleasing <i>In response to; beams</i> laurel

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- This wes hir sentens sweet and delectable:  
"A lusty lyfe in laves service bene." saying sweet  
joyful
- 10 Undir this brench ran doan a revir bright  
Of balmy liquour cristallyne of hew  
Agane the bevinly aissar skyis licht.  
Quhair did upone the tother syd peresew  
A nyctingall with suggurit notis new,  
Quhois angell fedderis as the pacok schone.  
15 This wes hir song and of a sentens trew:  
"All lave is lost bot upone God alone."  
water  
Reflecting  
other side spoke  
sweet notes  
Whose angelic feathers
- 20 With notis glaid and gloriis armonie  
This joyfull merle so salust scho the day  
Quhill rong the widdis of hir melody,  
Saying, "Awak, ye lvaris, o this May!  
Lo, fresche Flora hes flarest every spray  
As Natur hes hir taucht, the noble quene,  
The feild bene clothit in a new array:  
A lusty lyfe in laves service bene."  
harmony  
greets  
While the winds rang (reverberated)  
livers
- 25 Nevir sueter noys wes hand with levand man  
Na maid this mirry gentill nyctingall.  
Hir sound went with the never as it ran  
Outthow the fresche and flercist lusty vail.  
"O merle," quod scho, "O fule, styt of thy taill,  
30 For in thy song god sentens is thair none,  
For boith is tynt the tyme and the travail  
Of every lave bot upone God alone."  
was heard by living man  
Then made  
blooming  
fool, cause  
meaning  
lost
- 35 "Seis," quod the merle, "thy peching, nyctingale!  
Sall folk thair yewth spend into holines?  
30 Of yang sanctis growis auld feyndis, bat fail.  
Fy, ypocretit in yeiris tendimes,  
Agane the law of kynd thow gois expres  
That crakit aige makis on with yewth serene,  
Quhono Natur of conditionis maid dyvers:  
40 A lusty lyfe in laves service bene."  
Cause  
without fail  
hypocrite; youth  
Against; nature you speak  
crooked age should agree  
Nature made of diverse traits

Poem 66: *The Merle and the Nightingale*

- The nyctingaill said, "Fule, remembir thee  
 That both is yewth and eild and every hour  
 The lufe of God most deir to man suld be,  
 That Hym of nocht wnocht lyk His awin fighour  
 And deit Himself, fro deid him to succour.  
 O, qahithir wes kythir thair, trew lufe or none?  
 He is most trew and steidfast paramour:  
 All lufe is lost bot upon him alone."
- 45
- Fool (or Fowly  
old age)*
- The merle said, "Quby put God so grit bewy  
 In ladeis with sic womanly having,  
 Bot gifte He wald that they suld luvit be?  
 To lufe eik Natur gaif thame inclymyng.  
 And He, of Natur that wirker wes and king,  
 Wald nothing frustir put nor lat be sene  
 Into his creature of His awin making:  
 A lusty lyfe in lufes service bene."
- 50
- Why did God put such great beauty  
such femininity  
Unless; wished  
also  
creator  
worthless*
- The nyctingaill said, "Nocht to that behufe  
 Put God sic bewty in a ladeis face  
 That scho suld haif the thank thairfuir, or Lufe,  
 Bot He, the wirker, that put in her sic grace  
 Of bewty, bostie, riches, tyme or space,  
 And every gadnes that bene to cum or gone,  
 The thank redoundis to Him in every place:  
 All lufe is lost bot upon God alone."
- 55
- Not; purpose  
whenever or whenever  
it is to come or has been  
credit belongs*
- "O nyctingaill, it war a story nyce  
 That lufe suld nocht depend on cherite;  
 And gifte that vernew costrair be to vyce,  
 Than lufe mon be a veriew, as thinkis me,  
 For ay to lufe invy mone costrair be.  
 God bad eik lufe thy nyctbour fro the splene,  
 And quho than ladeis sueter nyctbouris be?  
 A lusty lyfe in lufes service bene."
- 65
- foolish tale  
if  
must  
also; heart  
sueter*
- The nyctingaill said, "Bird, qaby dois thow rai? An e man may in his lady tak sic delyt  
 75  
 Him to forget that hir sic bewtie gaif.
- 75
- rave*

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- And for his hevin rassaiif hir cullour qahyt.  
Hir goldin tressit hairis redomyt.  
Lyk to Appollois bennis thocht thay schone,  
Suld nocht him blind fro lufe that is perfyt:  
80 All lufe is lost bot upone God allone."
- The merle said, "Lufe is eas of honour ay,  
Lufe makis cowardis manheid to purchas,  
Lufe makis knychtis haudy at assvy,  
Lufe makis wreichis fall of lergenes,  
85 Lufe makis sueir folkin fall of bissines,  
Lufe makis slaggardis fresche and weill besene,  
Lufe changis vyce in vertewis nobilnes.  
A lusty lyfe in lufis service bene."
- The nyctingall said, "Trew is the contrary!  
90 Sic frastir lufe it blindis men so far  
Into thair myndis it makis thame to vary.  
In fals vane glory tha so drunkin ar,  
Thair wit is west, of wo thai ar nocht war  
Quhill that all wirchip away be fro thame gone —  
95 Farn, gaddis, and strenth — qahairfoir weill say I dar,  
All lufe is lost bot upone God allone."
- Than said the merle, "Myn errour I confes.  
This frustir lufe all is bot vanite.  
Blind ignorance me gaif sic hardines  
100 To argone so agane the varite.  
Quhairfoir I counsall every man that he  
With lufe nocht in the Feindis net be tone,  
Bot lufe the Lufe that did for his lufe de.  
All lufe is lost bot upone God allone."
- 105 Than sang thay both with vocis lowd and clair.  
The merle sang, "Man, lufe God that hes thee wrocht."  
The nyctingall sang, "Man, lufe the lord most deir  
That thee and all this world hes maid of nocht."  
The merle said, "Lufe Him that thy lufe hes socht  
110 Fra hevin to erd and heir tak flesche and bone."
- take her white colour (*i.e.*, lovely skin)  
resplendent  
beams though  
  
about  
during battle  
misers; generosity  
lazy folks; activity  
shaggards attractive  
  
Such worthless  
  
argue; the truth  
Fiend's; taken  
de  
  
made  
made from nothing  
sought  
earth

Poem 67: Love's Inconstancy

The nyctingall sang, "And with His deid thee bocht.  
All lufe is lost bot upone Him allone."      bought (redeemed)

- Thane flaw thir birdis our the bewis schese,  
Singing of lufe amang the levis small,  
115      Whan ythand pleid into my thoscht is grene,  
Bothe sleeping, walking, in rest and in travall.  
Me to recomfort most it dois avail,  
Agane for lufe quhen lufe I can find none,  
To think how song this merle and nyctingall:  
120      All lufe is lost bot upone God allone.

67. Love's Inconstancy

- Quha will behald of lufe the chance  
With suȝit dissavvyng countenance,  
In quhais fair dissimilance  
May none assure;  
5      Quhilk is begun with inconstancy  
And endis nocht but variance.  
Scho baldis with continuance  
No serviture.
- Discretion and considerance  
10      At both out of hir govirnance,  
Quhairfoit of it the schort plesance  
May nocht indare.  
Scho is so new of acquaintance,  
15      The auld gais fra remembrance.  
Thus I gifte our the observans  
Of lavis cure.
- It is ane point of ignorance  
To lufe in sic distemperance,  
Sen tyme mispendit may avance  
20      No creature.  
In lufe to keip allegiance,  
It war als nys an ordinance
- letj whoever wishes behold  
sweet deceiving  
whose; dissembling  
have trust  
black; inconstancy  
(with) nothing but inconstancy  
stratagem  
service
- control
- friendships  
old goes  
abandon  
labor
- signs  
such disorder  
Since; misused; profit
- were an foolish an order

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As quha wald bid ane deid man dance  
In sepulture.

*ask a dead man to dance  
(the) tomb*

68. *True Love*

[*And trew lufe rysis fro the splene*]

Now cumis aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.

*comes old age where youth  
arises from the heart*

5 Now culit is Darse Venus brand,  
Trew luvys fyne is ay kindilland,  
And I begyn to understand  
In feynit lufe quhat foly bene.  
Now cumis aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.

*cooled; torch  
always burning*

10 Quhill Venus fyre be deid and cauld,  
Trew luvys fyne nevir birmis bauld,  
So as the ta lufe wasis add,  
The tothir dois increas moit kene.  
Now cumis aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.

*false love what folly [there] is*

15 No man hes carege for to wryte  
Quhat plesans is in lufe perfyte,  
That hes in fenyecit lufe deliyt —  
Thair kyndnes is so contrair cleane.  
Now cumis aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.

*When; is dead and cold  
burns boldly  
one kind off love grows  
other; more keenly*

20 Full weill is him that may imprent  
Or oeywayis his haift consent  
To turne to trew lufe his intent  
And still the quarrell to sustene.  
25 Now cumis aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.

*fleſh ability  
perfect love*

*Who delights in false love  
Their natures are opposite*

*Well-off; impress upon  
in any way*

*conflict to withstand*

Poem 68: True Love

- 1 haif experience by myself,  
In huvia court anis did I dwell;  
Bot quhair I of a joy cowth tell,  
I cold of truble tell fyfene.
- 30 Now curris aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.
- Befoir quhair that I wes in deid,  
Now haif I confort for to speid;  
Quhair I had maugré to my meid,  
I brest reward and thankis betuene.
- 35 Now curris aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.
- Qahair lufe wes weet me to displease,  
Now find I into lufe grit eis;  
Quhair I had denger and discis,  
My breist all confort dois contene.
- 40 Now curris aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.
- 45 Quhair I wes hurt with jelowy  
And wald no lever wer bot I,  
Now quhair I lufe I wald all wy  
Als weill as I havit, I wene.  
Now curris aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
50 And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.
- Befoir quhair I durst nocht for schame  
My lufe discare nor tell hir name.  
Now think I wirscep wer and fame  
To all the world that it war sene.
- 55 Now curris aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.
- Befoir no wicht I did complese,  
So did hir denger me derene;  
And now I sett nocht by a bene  
Hir bewty nor hir twa fair eys.

have: myself

once

whereof / one joy could tell

uncertainty

succord

ill-will as my reward

expect [to receive] reward; also

great rage

disdain and pain

wished there were no lover but me

wish all men

[Were] loved as well as I

disclose

were

were soon

absurdity me derange

not the value of a heart

eyes

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Now cumis aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.

- 65 I haif a lufe farar of face,  
Quhorne in no denger may haif place.  
Qwhilk will me guerdoun gif and grace,  
And mercy ay quhen I me mene.  
Now cumis aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.

*farer*  
*In whom no dñe*  
*Who; give reward and grace*  
*Answer*

- 70 Unquyt I do nothing nor sane,  
Nor wairis a luvit thocht in vase.  
I sal be als weill luvit agane,  
Thair may no jangler me prevene.  
Now cumis aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.

*Unrepaid; say*  
*expended*  
*shall be as well loved in return*  
*gossip; injure*

- 75 Anc lufe so fare, so god, so suait,  
So riche, so rewthfull, and discreit,  
And for the kynd of man so meit,  
Nevirmoit sal be nec yit hes benc.  
Now cumis aige quhair yewth hes bene  
80 And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.

*natur*  
*merciful, wise*  
*nature; fitting*

- Is none sa trew a lufe as He  
That for trew lufe of us did de.  
He suld be laffit agane, think me,  
That wald sa fane our lufe obrene.  
85 Now cumis aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.

*die*  
*lived*  
*joyfully*

- Is non but grace of God, iwis,  
That can in yewth considir this.  
This fals dissavand wardis blis  
90 So gydis man in floritis grene.  
Now cumis aige quhair yewth hes bene,  
And trew lufe rysis fro the splene.

*[There] is no one; indeed*  
*deceiving*  
*guides; (i.e. during his youth)*

Poem 69: A Wooing in Dunfermline

69. *A Wooing in Dunfermline*

[*And that me thocht ane ferly cace*]

5	This hindir nyght in Dunfermline To me was tawid ane windir thing; That last ane tod wes with ane lame And with hir playit and maid gad game, Sync till his breist did hir imbrace And wald haif riddin hir lyk ane name — And that me thocht ane ferly cace.	The other night told; wondrous recently a fox; lamb fostered Then mounted; ran an astonishing thing
10	He braisit hir bony body swet And halsit hir with fordir feit, Syne schuk his taill with quhinge and yelp. And todlit with hir lyk ane quhelyp; Syne lowriz on growle and askit grace, And ay the lame cryd, "Lady, help!" — And that me thocht ane ferly cace.	embraced her lovely held; front feet Then shook; whining played; puppy crouched down flat all the while
15	The tod wes nowder lene nor skewry. He wes ane lusty red haire lowry. Ane lang tauld beist and grit with all. The silly lame wes all to small. To sic ane tribbill to hald ane base. Scho fled him nocht, fair mot hir fall — And that me thocht ane ferly cace.	neither lean; scruffy red-haired sly creature large everywhere innocent lamb/pox; too tumble; base well may she prosper
20	The tod wes Reid, the lame wes quhyte, Scho wes ane morsall of delyte — He lovit na yowis, asild, tuich, and sklender. Because this lame wes yong and tender, He ran upon hir with a race, And scho schup nevir for till defend hir — And that me thocht ane ferly cace.	red; white ewes; tough; skinny rush tried not at all to
25	He grappit hir abowt the west And handlit hir as he had best. This innocent that nevir trespass Tuke hert that scho wes handlit fast,	wrist hastie had transgressed Was pleased
30		

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- 35 And lute him kis hir lusty face.  
His girnand gamis hir nocht agast —  
And that me thocht are ferly cace.
- He held hir till him be the hals.  
And spak full fair, thocht he wes fals,  
Syne said and swoir to hir be God  
That he suld nocht tunch hir prenecod.  
40 The silly thing trowd him, allace.  
The lame gaif credence to the tod —  
And that me thocht are ferly cace.
- I will no lesingis put in vers,  
Lyk as this jangleris dois rehers,  
Bot be quhat maner thay war mard.  
Qohen licht wes owt and durris wes bard  
I wait nocht gif he gaif hir grace.  
50 Bot all the hollis wes stoppit hard —  
And that me thocht are ferly cace.
- Qohen men dois fleit in joy maist far,  
Sone cumis wo or thay be war.  
Qohen carpand wer thir two most crows,  
The wolf be ombesett the hous  
Uponis the tod to mak ane chace.  
55 The lamb than cheipit lyk a mows —  
And that me thocht are ferly cace.
- Throw hidowis yowling of the wowl  
This wylie tod plat doas on growf,  
And in the silly lambis skin
- 60 He crap als far as he micht wit  
And hid him thair are weill lang space.  
The yowis besyd thay maid na din —  
And that me thocht are ferly cace.
- Qohen of the tod wes hard no peip,  
65 The wowl west all had bene on sleep;  
And quhill the bell had strikkin ten,
- let; lovely  
grinding fangs she did not fear
- well  
through  
Then; aware; by  
touch her pincushion
- naive; believed  
gave
- falsehood  
these gossips  
injured  
doors were barred  
if he showed her mercy  
holes were
- float  
Soon comes; before  
talking; these; intimately  
surrounded  
chase  
squeaked; mouse
- Through hideous  
creeped on the ground
- crept; get  
very long time  
ever nearly
- beard no peep  
wolf thought; asleep  
when; struck

Poem 70: To the Queen

The wowl hes drest him to his den,  
Protestand for the secound place.  
And this report I wih my pen.  
70 How at Dunsferling fell the cace.

went  
Claiming

70. To the Queen  
[Madam, your men said]

Madam, your men said thai wald ryd  
And latt this Fasterennis Evin oser slyd,  
Bott than thair wyffis cam furth in flockis  
And baid than betteis soin abyd  
5 Att haem, and lib than of the pockis.

intended to ride  
let; slip by  
But then; wives  
better now to remain  
home: care themselves of the pox

Nou propois thai, sen ye dwell still,  
Of Venus feest to fang an fill,  
Bott in the fedic preiff thai na cockis.  
For till heff riddin bed bein los ill,  
10 Nor latt thair wyffis breid the pockis.<sup>1</sup>

since you remain here  
Of Venus' feast to take your fill  
field tested they no [fighting] cocks

Sum of your men sic curage hed,  
Dam Venus fyre sa hard than sted,  
Thai brak up durris and raeff up lockis  
To get ane pamphelct on a plod  
15 That thai mycht lib tharn of the pockis.

such sexual desire had  
beset  
doors; tore up  
wench in a plaid (?)  
have sex with them

Sum that war ryatous as rammis  
Ar nou maid tame lyk oty lambris,  
And settin down lyk sarye crockis,  
And bes forsackin all sic gamnis  
20 That men callis libbin of the pockis.

were eager as rams  
any lamb  
brought low; old ewes  
such games

Sum thocht thamselfis stark lyk gyandis  
Ar nou maid wack lyk willing wandis

strong like giants  
made weak; giant wands

<sup>1</sup> Lines 9–10: For to have ridden away would have been less humiliating / Than to have allowed their wives to have been infected with the pox

*The Works of William Dunbar*

With schinnis scharp and small lyk rockis,  
And gottin thair bak in bayth thair handis  
For oer off libbin of the pockis.

*thin like distaffs  
holding their backs  
excessive*

I saw coelinkis me besyd  
The young men to their hawses gyd  
Had bettir lugget in the stockis.  
Sum fra the bordell wald nocht byd  
Quhill that thai gatt the Spanyie pockis.

*prostitutes  
guide  
lodged  
brothel; stay away  
Until they got the Spanish Pox*

Thairfeir, all young men, I you pray,  
Keip you fra harlottis nycht and day —  
Thai soll repeat quhai with than yockis —  
And be war with that perreilous play  
That men callis libbin of the pockis.

*whoever; yokes  
of that perilous play*

**71. Of a Black Moor**

[*My ladye with the mekle lippis*]

Lang heff I maed of ladyes quhytt,  
Nou of an blak I will indyt;  
That landet farth of the last schippis.  
Quhou fain wald I descriyve perfyt!  
5 My ladye with the mekle lippis.

*Long have I written; white  
write  
recent ships  
How happily would  
bigg lips*

Quhou schou is tute mowitt lyk an acp.  
And lyk a gangarall onto gaep,  
And quhou bir schort catt nois up skippis.  
And quhou schou schynes lyk oey saep.  
10 My ladye with the mekle lippis.

*large-mouthed like an ape  
road to grab onto  
cat nose turns up  
shines like any soap*

Quhen schou is claid in reche apparmall,  
Schou blinkis als brycht as an tur barrell.  
Quhen schou was born the son tholit clippis,  
The nycht be fain faucht in hit querrell —  
15 My ladye with the mekle lippis.

*gleams  
sun suffered an eclipse  
night; fought*

Poem 72: In a Secret Place

- Quhai for hir sack with speir and scheld  
Preiffis maest mychelleye in the feld,  
Sall kis and wilhe hir go in gruppis.  
And fra thyne furth hir luff sall weld —  
20 My ladye with the mekle lippis.
- Whoever; sake  
Prove  
embrace  
from thenceforth
- And quhai in fedle receaves schaem  
And tynis thair his krychtlic naem,  
Sall cum behind and kis hir hippis  
And nevir to uther confort claein,  
25 My ladye with the mekle lippis.
- who; field; shame  
loses; name  
hips  
claim

72. In a Secret Place

[Ye brek my hart, my bony one]

- In secreit place this hyndir nyght  
I hard aue beyme say till aue bricht:  
"My hany, my hart, my hoip, my heill,  
I have bene lang your laifar leill  
5 And can of yow get confort naue.  
How lang will ye with danger deill?  
Ye brek my hart, my bony aue."
- the other night  
heard a young man say to a lady  
honey; hope; happiness  
devoted lover
- treat me with disdain  
preety one
- His bony beird wes kemmit and croppit,  
Bot all with cale it wes bedroppit,  
10 And he wes townysche, peir, and gakit,  
He clappit fast, he kist and chukkit  
As with the glaikis he wer osirgane.  
Yit be his feirris he wald have folkit —  
"Ye brek my hart, my bony aue."
- beard; combed, clipped  
breath; besplattered  
townsfolk; bold; foolish  
embraced; kissed; fondled  
foolish desires; overcome  
behavior; fucked her
- Quod he: "My hantz, swet as the hantye,  
Sen that I borne wes of my mynayte,  
I never wowitz weyght bot yow.  
My wambe is of your luif sa few.  
That as aue gaist I glour and grane.  
15 I trymble sa, ye will not trow,  
Ye brek my hart, my bony aue."
- sweet as honey  
Since; mommy  
wuzzed anyone  
belly; so full  
ghost I stare; great  
believe
- 20

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- "Tehe!" quod scho, and gaif aue gawfe,  
 "Be still, my tuchan and my calle,  
 My new spanit howffing fra the sowk,  
 25 And all the blythes of my bowk.  
 My sweet swanting, saif yow allane  
 Na leyd I luiffit all this oatk:  
 Full leif is me yowt graces gane."
- gave a gaffaw  
 tactile object  
 weanling lamb  
 delight of my body  
 fellow  
 bad I loved; weak  
 Very dear to me is: ugly mug
- Quod he: "My claver and my carldodie,  
 30 My hony soppis, my sweet possodie,  
 Be not oure bosteous to your billie,  
 Be warne hairtit and not evill wille.  
 Your heylis, qahyt as qahalis bone,  
 35 Garris ryis on loft my qahillelile:  
 Ye brek my hart, my bony aue."
- clover: wild flower  
 honey-studded bread: spiced drink  
 too rough; lower  
 ill-willed  
 heels, white as whale's bone  
 Makes rise aloft my willy-lily
- Quod scho: "My clype, my unspaynit gyane,  
 With maderis mylk yit in your mychane,  
 My belly haddran, my sweete hurle bawsy,  
 40 My hony gakkis, my slawsy gawsy,  
 Your musing waild perse aue harte of stane.  
 Tak god confort, my grit-heidit slawsy:  
 Full leif is me your graces gane."
- clumsy fellow: weaned giant  
 tunney  
 belly-cover; impetuous fellow  
 sweet food; plump fellow (?)  
 big-headed fellow
- Quod he: "My kid, my capricalous,  
 45 My bony baib with the ruch brylyous,  
 My tendir gyrtle, my wallie gowdye,  
 My tyllie myrtle, my crowdie mowdie,  
 Qubone that oure mouthis dois meit at aue,  
 My stang dois storkyn with your towdie:  
 55 Ye brek my hart, my bony aue."
- wood grouse (?)  
 babe; rough pudendum (?)  
 girlie; pretty flower (?)  
 female genitalia  
 snake stiffen; buttocks  
 pretty one
- Quod scho: "Now tak me by the hand,  
 Welcum, my golk of Maric land,  
 My chirrie and my maikles manyous,  
 My sowklar sweet as ony anyoun,  
 My strumill stirk yit new to spune.  
 50 I am applyit to your oparyoun:  
 I leif rycht weill your graces gane."
- fool from faerie land (?)  
 cherry; matchless darling  
 twinkler; onion  
 stumbling bullock; being weaned  
 agreeable to your nose  
 face

Poem 73: These Fair Ladies That Repair to Court

- He gaiff to hir aye apill rubye.  
Quod scho, "Gramercye, my sweet cowhubye!"  
And thai tway to aye play began  
60 Quhilk men dois call the dery das,  
Quhill that thair myrthis met baythe in ase.  
"Wo is me," quod scho, "Quhair will ye, man?  
Best now I haif that graceles gane."
- red apple  
sweet fool  
*(i.e., the dance of love)*  
joys  
*Where will you [go]*

73. These Fair Ladies That Repair to Court

- Thir ladeis fair that maks repair  
And in the courte ar kend,  
Three dayis thair thai will do mair  
Ane mater for to end  
5 Then thair god men will do in ten  
For ony craift thai can.  
So weill thai ken qihat tyme and qubet  
Thair meynis thai could mak than.
- These: are present  
well-known  
more  
skill they have  
know  
complaints
- With the stell noy thai can convoy  
A mater finalie,  
Yit reyld and moy thai keep it coy  
On evynnis quycle,  
Thair do no mys, bot gif thai kys  
10 And kepis collatious,  
Quhut rak of this? The mater is  
Brocht to conclusioune.
- difficulty; conduct  
decisively  
modest; quiet  
evenings  
wrong; if; kiss  
*[as] site-a-site*  
*Why does it matter; business*
- Ye may wit weill thai have grit feill  
A mater to solist.  
Traist as the stell, syne never a deill  
20 Quhone thai cum hame is myst.  
Thir laideis ar, me think, ryght far  
Sic ladeis behaldin to  
That sa weill dae go to the bar  
Quhone thair is oicht ado.
- know well; ability  
solict (interest)  
*True as steel*  
mixed  
*These lords*  
bar (*i.e., the judge's ruling*)  
When; something to be done

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 25  | Thairfoir, I rid, gif ye have pleid<br>Or mater in to pley,<br>To mak remeid send in your steid<br>Your ladeis gratbit up gay.<br>Thai can defend, evin to the end,<br>Ane mater furthe expres.           | advise, if you have [af] case<br>to litigate<br>To have success<br>dekked our gaudy                               |
| 30  | Suppois thai spend, it is onkend<br>Thair geir is not the les.  | Although, unknown<br>wealth/sexual apparatus  |
| In quyet place and thai have space<br>Within les noe twa hoaris,  |   | if  |
| 35  | Thai can, percase, purchas sic grace<br>At the compositours,<br>Thair composition, without suspition,<br>Thair finalie is endit<br>With expeditious and full remission<br>40 And sellis thairto appendit. | perchance, achieve such success<br>From the compositors<br>conclusively is ended<br>settlement<br>seals; attached |
| All haill almoist thai mak the coist<br>With sobir recompence.<br>Rycht little loist thai get indoist<br>All haill thair evidens. |   | wholly; cost<br>endured<br>wholly   |
| 45  | Sic ladyis wyis ar all to pryis,<br>To say the verité,<br>Sic can devyis and nose supprys<br>Thame throw thair honesté.   | Such; wise; [bef] prized<br>truth<br>Such [fashen]; devise; damage  |

74. *Tidings from the Session*

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Ane moorlandis man of uplandis mak<br>At hame thus to his nychtbour spak:<br>"Quhat tythingis, gossope, peace or weir?"<br>The uther roundit in his eir: |  | moorland; highland kind<br>home; neighbor<br>tidings; friend; war<br>whispered |
| 5  | "I tell yow this, undir confessous,<br>Bot laitlie lychtit of my meit,<br>I come of Edinburch fra the Seissoun." | lately alighted from my mare   |

Poem 74: Tidings from the Session

- "Qwhat tythingis herd ye thair, I pray yow?"  
The nether answerit, "I sall say yow,  
Keip this in secret, gentill brudir —  
Is no man thair trowis ate udir.  
A commoun doar of transgressioune  
Of innocent folkis prouenys a fuder:  
Sic tythandis hard I at the Session.
- 15     "Sum withe his fellow rownys him to pleis  
That wald for anger byt of his neis.  
His fa sum be the extar ledis.  
Sum patiris with his mouthe on beidis  
That hes his mynd all on oppression.  
20     Sum bekis full laich and schawis bare heidis  
Wald lake full heich war not the Session.  
  
"Sum bydand law layis land in wed,  
Sum superspendit gois to his bed.  
Sum spedis for he in court hes meynis,  
Of parcialite sum complenis,  
How feid and favour fleynis discretioune.  
Sum speikis full fair and falslie feynis:  
Sic tythandis hard I at the Session.
- 25     Sum castis summoneis and sum exceppis,  
Sum standis besyd and skayld law keppis,  
Sum is contineuit, sum wynnis, sum tynis,  
Sum makis thame myyre at the wynis,  
And sum putt out of his possessioune,  
Sum hymet and on credence dynis:  
35     Sic tythingis hard I at the Session.  
  
"Sum sweris and sum foesaikis God,  
Sum is ane lamb skyn is a tod.  
Sum on his young his kyndnes tarsis,  
Sum kervis throittis, and sum cuttis pursin.  
40     To gallows sum gais with processioune,  
Sum sanis the Sait, and sum thame cursis:  
Sic tythingis hard I at the Session.
- 10     *trust another*  
*wrong-doer*  
*takes advantage of many*
- 15     *whispers [to] him pleasing things*  
*bite off his nose*  
*for one man by the arm leads*  
*One matters; in prayer*  
*harmful actions*  
*bows; low; bare heads*  
*act quite haughty were he not [at]*
- 20     *One whose case is pending; in mortgage*  
*One who is bankrupt*  
*succumb because; friend*  
*Of favoritism*  
*disliking and liking corrupt*  
*assembles*  
*Such*
- 25     *rejects summons; objects*  
*has [at] little legal knowledge*  
*receives a continuance; loses*  
*merry with wine*  
*loses his property*  
*is impoverished; loses one credit*
- 35     *swears to; forsakes*  
*for*  
*carries*  
*carries threats; cuts purses*  
*goes*  
*blesses the Court*

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- 45     "Religious men of dyvers places  
Cumis thair to wwo and se fair faces,  
Baith Carmelitis and Coirdeleiris  
Cumis thair to gener and get freiris,  
As is the use of thair professiou,  
The younger at the elder leiris:  
Sic tythingis herd I at the Session.
- 50     "Thair cumis young monkis of het complexiou,  
Of devout mynd, lufe, and affection,  
And in the courte thair proud flesche dantis,  
Full fadurlyk with pechis and partis.  
Thair ar so humill of intercessions,  
55     All mercyfull women thair errand grants:  
Sic tythingis hard I at the Session."

*from various communities*  
*Come there to woo*  
*Franciscans*  
*generate; recruit friars*  
*custom*  
*from the older learn*

*hot*  
*devout; love*  
*subdue*  
*fatherly; gentle*  
*humble*

75. *To the Merchants of Edinburgh*

- 5     Quhy will ye, merchantis of renoun,  
Lat Edinburgh, your nobill toun,  
For laik of reformatiou  
The commone proffitt tyne and fame?  
Think ye not schame  
That onie uther regious  
Sall with dishonour hurt your name?
- 10     May nane pas throw your principall gaitis  
For stink of haddockis and of scattis,  
For cryis of carlingis and debaitis,  
For feusum flyttinis of defame.  
Think ye not schame,  
Befoir strangeris of all estaitis  
That sic dishonour hurt your name?
- 15     Your Stirkand Stull that standis dirk  
Haldis the lycht fra your parroche kirk,  
Your foirstairis makis your housis mirk

*Why; high standing*  
*allow*  
*lack of improvement*  
*good injure and defame (abuse)*  
*Are you not ashamed*  
*any other*  
*Might with insult tarnish*

*pass through; gates*  
*skates (fish)*  
*old women; arguments*  
*foul hurling of insults*

*social ranks*

*Stinking Passageway; dark*  
*blocks; parish church*  
*foirstairs; dark*

Poem 75: To the Merchants of Edinburgh

- Lyk na curtray bot heir at haire.  
Think ye not schame.  
Sa littill poleisie to work,  
In huri and sklander of your name?
- At your Hie Croce quhar gold and silk  
Sould be, hair is bot crudis and milk,  
And at your Trone bot cokill and wilk,  
Pansches, paddingis of Jok and Jame.
- Think ye not schame,  
Sen as the world sayis that ilk,  
In huri and sclander of your name?
- Your commone menstrallis hes no toun  
Bot "Now the day dawis" and "Into Joun."  
Cunningar men man serve Sanct Closoun  
And nevir to uther craftis clame.
- Think ye not schame,  
To hald sic mowaris on the moyne,  
In huri and sclander of your name?
- Tailyouris, souffris, and craftis vyll  
The fairest of your streitis dois fyll,  
And merchantis at the Stinkand Styll  
Ar hamperit in aunc honycame.
- Think ye not schame  
That ye have neither witt nor wyll  
To wiis yourselff ane betir name?
- Your burgh of beggeris is aunc nest,  
To schout thai swentyouris will not rest.  
All honest folk they do molest,  
Sa pitcuslie thai cry and ramse.
- Think ye not schame,  
That for the poore hes nothing drest,  
In huri and sclander of your name?
- Your profficit daylie dois increas,  
Your godlie workis, les and les.

no country

So few improvements to make

*High Cross where  
Should, card  
the public weighing beam; shelfish  
Tripe, haggis*

*Since the world says the same*

minstrels; *tunes* (songs)

downs; *June*

More skillful; *mast*; *St. Closoun* (?)  
*lay claim*

*keep such mockers at the moon*

Tailors, cobblers; *vile*  
*scifile*

*Stinking Passages*  
*crammed into a honeycomb*

*neither wit nor will*

beggars  
*thare scoundrels*

*clamer*

*been provided*

*virtuous deeds*

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- Through streittis nane may mak progres  
For cry of crukit, blind, and lame. *crippled*
- 55 Think ye not schame.  
That ye sic substance dois posses,  
And will not win ane bettir name? *such*
- Sen for the Court and the Seissoun,  
The great repair of this regioun  
Is in your burgh, thairfoir be bous.  
60 To mend all faultis that ar to blame,  
And eschew schame. *Since to  
attendance  
ready*
- Gif thai pas to aneather toun,  
Ye will decay and your great name. *avoid  
If they (the Court and Session) are moved to  
be diminished*
- Thairfoir strangeris and leidis treit,  
65 Tak not ower mekill for thair meat,  
And gar your merchandis be discreet.  
That na extortiounes be, proclame  
All fraud and schame.  
Keip ordour and poore sighbouris beit,  
70 That ye may gett ane bettir name. *Beiges (subjects) welcome  
Do not overcharge for their food  
make; reasonable  
To prevent extortions, denounce  
shameful conduct  
assent*
- Singalar proffet so dois yow blind,  
The common proffet gois behind.  
I pray that Lord remedie to fynd  
That deit into Jerusalem,  
75 And gar yow schame,  
That sumtyme resoun may yow bind,  
For to restor to yow gaid name. *Personal gain  
general welfare  
(a) remedy  
died in  
cause  
govern  
restore*

*76. How Dunbar Was Desired to Be a Friar*

- This nycht befor the drawing clair  
Me thocht Sanct Francis did to me apper  
With ane religious abbeit in his hand  
And said, "In this go cleith thee my servand,  
5 Reffus the warkl, for thow men be a freir." *Last night; done  
Saint  
habit  
cloke; (as) my servant  
Renounce; must*

Poem 76: How Dhuubar Was Desired to Be a Friar

With him and with his abbeit bayth I skarris Lyk to ase man that with a gaist wes marris. Me thoscht on bed he layid it me alone, Bot on the flure delyverly and sone 10      I lap thairfra and nevir wald cum nar it.	<i>By; was startled ghost was frightened laid it over me floor quickly lapsed; come near</i>
Quoth he, "Quhy skarris thou with this holy weid? Cleith thee thairin, for weir it thou most neid. Thow that hes lang done Venus lawis triche Sall now be freir and in this abbeit preiche. 15      Delay it nocht, it mon be done but dreid."	<i>Why scares; garment Clothe; wear taught Venus' laws habit neid; without [af] doubt</i>
Quod I, "Sanct Francis, loving be thee till, And thankit mot thou be of thy gude will To me, that of thy clathis ar so kynd. Bot thame to weir it nevir come in my mynd. 20      Sweet confesour, thou tak it nocht in ill.	<i>thanked must; for generous</i>
"In haly legendis haif I hard allevin Ma sanctis of bischoppis nor freiris, be sic sevin. Of full few freiris that hes bene sanctis I reid; Quhairfeir ga bring to me aue bischopis weid, 25      Gife evir thou wald my sawle gaid unto Hevin."	<i>have I heard indeed More saints than; by seven sure; have read Therefore; gone ff; soul went</i>
"My brether off hes maid thee supplicationis Be epistillis, sermonis, and relationis To tak the abyte, bot thou did postpone. But forder proces cum on thairfeir annone, 30      All circumstance put by and excusationis."	<i>brethren; to you letters; reports habit Without further delay excuses put aside; excuses</i>
"Gif evir my fortoun wes to be a freir, The dait thainof is past full mony a year; For into every lusty toun and place Of all Yngland, from Berwick to Kalice, 35      I haif into thy habet maid gad cheer.	<i>If date (time); year lively; manor house Calais gone cheerfully</i>
"In freiris weid full fairly haif I fleichit. In it I haif in pulpit gon and preichit In Dermtoun kirk and eik in Casterberry;	<i>flattered also</i>

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- 40 In it I past at Dover oar the ferry  
Throw Picardy, and thair the peple teichit. over  
there; taught
- "Als lang as I did beir the freiris style,  
In me, God wait, wes mony wrink and wyle.  
In ese wes falset with every wicht to flatier,  
Quhilk mycht be flennit with na haly watter.  
45 I wes ay reddy all men to begyle."friar's role  
knows; trick  
falsehood; person  
cleansed  
always
- This freir that did Sanct Francis thair appere,  
Ane fleind he wes in liknes of ane freir.  
He vaneist away with stynk and fyrie smowk.  
With him, me thoscht, all the hours end he towk,  
50 And I awork as wy that wes in weir. fiend  
wall  
*awoke as one who was perturbed*

77. *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*

- Of Februar the fyiftene nyght  
Full lang befoir the dayis lycht *In; fifteenth night*
- I lay in till a trance,  
And than I saw baith Hevin and Hell.
- 5 Me thocht amangis the feyndis fell  
Mahoun gart cry ane dancecruel fiends  
Of schrewis that wer never schreivin  
Aganis the frist of Fasternis Evin*Mohammad (i.e., Satan) proclaimed*  
*sinned that were unconfessed*
- Aganis the frist of Fasternis Evin  
To mak thair observance.
- 10 He bud gallandis ga graith a gyis*In preparation for the feast of Easter's Eve*  
And kast up garnouritis in the skyis  
That last came out of France.
- ordered gallants to go and prepare a masquerade  
throw up wild coverings  
recently came from
- "Lat se," quod he, "now, quha begynnis?"  
With that the foul Sevin Deidly Synniswho shall begin  
foul Seven Deadly Sins
- 15 Begowth to leip at anis.*Began to leap at once*
- And first of all in dance wes Pryd,*Pride*  
With hair wyld bak and bonet on syd,*spread across his back (?)*
- Lyk to mak waistie wanis.*cower wasted dwellings*
- And round abowt him as a quheill*like a wheel*
- 20 Hang all in rumpillis to the heill*Hung all in plait to the heel*

Poem 77: *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*

- His kethat for the nazis.  
Mony proud trumperour with him trippit,  
Thow skaldand fyre ay as they skippit  
Thay gyrded with hidous grasis.
- His surcoat (?) for the occasion  
trumpeters (i.e., musicians); danced  
through burning fire  
grewled, grownd*
- 25 Heilie harlotis on hawtane wyis  
Come in with mony sindrie gyris,  
Bot yit lache nevir Mahoun  
Quhill preistis come is with bair schevin nelkis —  
Than all the feyndis lewche and maid gekkis,  
30 Blak Belly and Bawsy Broun.
- Proud rogues in haughty fashion  
tumdy costumes  
But yet the Devil never laughed  
Until priests; bare shaved necks  
Then, laughed and made gestures  
(i.e., two of the demons)*
- Than Yre come in with start and strife.  
His hand wes ay upoun his knyfe,  
He brandeist lyk a beir.  
Bostaris, braggaris, and barganeris  
35 Elfir him passit into pairis,  
All bodin in feir of weir.  
In jakkis and stryppis and bonetis of stell,  
Their leggis wer chenyeyit to the heill,  
Frawart wes their affier.  
40 Sum upoun udir with brandis beft,  
Sum jaggit uthiris to the heft  
With kryvis that scherp cowd scheir.
- Wrath; quarreling and strife  
made gestures like a bear  
Roasters, braggarts, and arguers  
All equipped in anticipation of war  
padded jerkins; metal spurs; helmets  
legs were chained at the heels  
Hustle was their demeanor  
others; swords beat  
stabbed others; hufi  
knives that sharply could slice*
- Nist in the dance followit Invy,  
Fild full of feid and fellony,  
45 Hid malyce and dispyle.  
For pryvie hatrent that tratoar trymlit.  
Him followit mony freik dissymlit  
With ferreyit windis quhyte,  
And flameris into menis facis,  
50 And hakbytnaris in secret places  
To ley that had delyte.  
And rownaris of fals lesingis —  
Allace, that courtis of noble kingis  
Of thame can nevir be quyte.
- Envy  
hated and cruelty  
Hidden; resentment  
secret hatred; trembled  
deceitful men  
false white words  
back-biters (i.e., slanderers)  
lie  
whisperers; lies  
Alan  
free*

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- 55 Next him in dans come Cuvatyce,  
Rute of all evill and grund of vye.  
That nevir cowld be contest.  
Catyvis, wrechis, and ockeraris,  
Hudpykis, hundaris, and gadderaris  
60 All with that warlo went.  
Out of thair throtis thay schot on adder  
Hett molten gold, me thocht a fudder.  
As fyeflawcht maist fervent.  
Ay as thay tornit thame of schot,  
65 Feynidis fild thame new up to the throt  
With gold of all kin peant.
- Syne Sweines, at the seound bidding,  
Come lyk a sow out of a midding.  
Fall sleepy wes his grunyie.  
70 Mony swerit, bambard-belly huddroun,  
Mony slute daw and sleepy duddroun  
Him servit ay with scouylie.  
He drew thame fueth in till a cheryie,  
And Belliall with brydill renyie  
75 Evir lascht thame on the luryie.  
In dance thay war so slow of feit,  
Thay gaif thame in the fyre a heit  
And maid thame quicker of couanye.
- Than Lichery, that lathly cors,  
80 Come berand lyk a bagit hors,  
And Lythenes did him leid.  
Thair wes with him anc ugly sort  
And moey stynkand fowl transort  
That had in syn bene deid.
- 85 Quhen thay wer entrit in the dance,  
Thay wer full streng of countenance  
Lyk tuckas birmand reid.  
All led thay uthir by the tervis.  
Suppos thay fycket with thair crisis.  
90 It mycht be na remeid.
- dance; Covetise  
Root; [the] foundation of vice  
could  
Villains, misers, and unavers  
Slayfous, boarlers, and gatherers  
evil being  
spewed on the others  
Hot molten; a cartload  
Like a lightning flash most intense  
emptied themselves of shot  
Fiends filled; throat  
every kind stamped [into coins]
- Then Stoch  
dungheap  
grunning  
lazy, fat-bellied sellers  
slurish slatterns; sleepy sloven  
reluctance  
into a set of chains  
bridle reins  
lashed them; joins  
slow of foot  
dance
- Lachery; loathsome creature  
Come moving like a pregnant horse  
Wantonness; lead  
assortment  
stinking foul corpses  
had died in sin
- strange in facial appearance  
Like a mahl's tonge burning red  
genitals  
Although they fidgeted with their crises  
It could not be helped

Poem 77: *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*

- Than the fowl monstir Gluttony,  
Of wame unsasiable and gredy.  
To dance he did him dres.  
Him followit mory fowll drunckart  
95 With can and collep, cop and quart,  
In surflet and excess.  
Full mone a waistles wallydrag  
With wanis unwieldable did farth wag  
In creische that did incres.  
100 "Drynk!" ay thay cryit, with mory a gaip.  
The scyndis gaif thame hait leid to laip,  
Thair lavery wes na les.
- Na menstrualis playit to thame, but dowt,  
For glemen thair wer haldin owt  
105 Be day and eik by nycht,  
Except a menstrual that slew a man,  
Swa till his heretage he wan  
And entirt be "breif of richt."
- Than cryd Mahoun for a Heleand padyane.  
110 Syne ran a feynd to feche Macfadyane  
Far northwart in a nake.  
Be he the correnoch had done schout  
Erschmen so gadderit him abowt,  
In Hell grit nowme thay take.
- 115 Thae tarmegantis, with tag and timer,  
Full lowd in Ersche begowth to clatter  
And rowp lyk reuin and ruk.  
The Devill sa devit wes with thair yell  
That in the deepest pot of Hell  
120 He snorit thame with smoke.
- Nist that a torsament wes tryid  
That lang befor in Hell wes cryid  
In presens of Mahoun.  
Betwix a telyour and aane sowtar,  
125 A pricklous and ane hobbell clowttar,  
The batres wes maid boun.
- fool monster Gluttony*  
*belly unsasiable*  
*make ready*  
*drunkard*  
*tankard, cup*
- wastless slab*  
*flabby bellies*  
*creases [of fat]*  
*gaping mouth*  
*gave them hot lead to lap*  
*allowance was no less*
- without [af] doubt*  
*entertainers; held out*  
*else*
- heritage he soon*  
*was entered by "breif of right"*
- the Devil; Highland pageant*  
*Thew; fetch Macfadyane*  
*need*
- By [the time] he had shouted the summons*  
*Highlanders (Gaelic folk); gathered*
- Those fiends, in rage and tatters*  
*in Gaelic began*  
*crooked like ravens and rooks*  
*so disfigured*  
*pit*  
*smothered*
- attempted*  
*announced*  
*(i.e., Satan)*
- Between a tailor and a shoemaker*  
*house-stabber, a boot-mender*  
*feats were made ready*

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- The tailyour baith with speir and scheild  
 Convoyit wes unto the feild  
     With mory lymmar loun  
 130     Of sense-byttaris and beist knappars,  
    Of stomok-steillaris and clayth-takkars —  
     A graceles garisoen.
- His baser born wes him befoir  
 Quhairin wes clowtis ate hundredth scoir.  
 135     Likane of divers hew,  
    And all stowin out of sindry webbis.  
    For qhill the Greik Sie fillis and ebbis,  
     Telyouris will nevir be trew.  
 The tailyour on the barrowis blent,  
 140     Allais, he tynt all hardyment,  
    For feir he chaingit hew.  
    Mahoun come furth and maid him krycht —  
    Na ferly thocht his hart wes licht  
     That to sic honor grew.
- 145     The tailyour hecht hely befoir Mahoun  
    That he salld ding the sowtar down.  
    Thocht he wer strang as must.  
    Bot quhen he on the barrowis blenkit  
    The telyouris cutage a littill schrenkit,  
 150     His hairt did all ourcast.  
    And quhen he saw the sowtar cum  
    Of all sic wurdis he wes full dum,  
    So soir he wes agast.  
 155     For be in hart take sic a scanner  
    Ane rak of farris lyk ony thunner  
    Went fra him, blast for blast.
- The sowtar to the feild him drest,  
 He wes convoyid out of the west  
     As ane defender stout.  
 160     Supposis he had na lusty varlot,  
    He had full mony lowsy harlett  
    Round rynrand him aboutz.
- rancally rousers  
 name-bitter; hawking thread snappers  
 stomach-steelers; cloth-tackers  
 set of defenders
- carried  
 Wherein were pieces of clok  
 Each one of different color  
 stolen from various larger cloks  
 For while the Greek Sea ebbs and flows
- Dots guced  
 Alas, he lost all courage  
 fear he blanch'd
- No wonder though his heart was light  
 such; received
- pledged strongly  
 knock the cobbler down  
 strong on fo ship's mast  
 Dots guced  
 shrank  
 turn gray  
 shoemaker approach  
 such words  
 afraid  
 took such a fright  
 A series; thunder
- shoemaker; readied
- Even though; noble attendant  
 ice-ridden rousers  
 running

Poem 77: *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*

- |     |  |   |
|-----|--|---|
| 165 | <p>His baner wes of barkit hyd<br/>         Quhairis Sanct Gimega did glyd<br/>         Befoir than rebald rowt.<br/>         Full sowtarlyk he wes of laitis,<br/>         For ay betuix the harnes plaitis<br/>         The sly birst out.</p>                             | <i>barkit</i><br><i>Quhairis Sanct Gimega</i><br><i>did glyd</i><br><i>befoir</i><br><i>than rebald rowt.</i><br><i>Full sowtarlyk</i><br><i>he wes of laitis,</i><br><i>For ay betuix the harnes plaitis</i><br><i>The sly birst out.</i>  |
| 170 | <p>Quhen on the talyeour he did luke,<br/>         His haire a littill dwamynge tolle.<br/>         Uneis he mycht upsitt.<br/>         Into his stommok wes sic aue stir<br/>         Of all his dennar quhilc cost him deir,<br/>         His breist held never a hit.</p> | <i>Quhen</i><br><i>on the talyeour</i><br><i>he did luke,</i><br><i>His haire a littill dwamynge tolle.</i><br><i>Uneis he mycht upsitt.</i><br><i>Into his stommok</i><br><i>wes sic aue stir</i><br><i>Of all his dennar quhilc</i><br><i>cost him deir,</i><br><i>His breist held never a hit.</i> |
| 175 | <p>To comfort him or he raid forder,<br/>         The devill of knychtheid gaif him oder,<br/>         For stynk than he did spit.<br/>         And he about the devillis nek<br/>         Did spew agane aue quart of bleck,</p>  | <i>To comfort him or he raid forder,</i><br><i>The devill of knychtheid gaif him oder,</i><br><i>For stynk than he did spit.</i><br><i>And he about the devillis nek</i><br><i>Did spew agane aue quart of bleck,</i>   |
| 180 | <p>Thus krychtil he him quitt.<br/> <br/>         Than forty tymis the feynd cryd, "Fy!"<br/>         The sowtar ryght effeirly<br/>         Unto the feild he socht.</p>  | <i>Thus krychtil he him quitt.</i><br><br><i>Than forty tymis the feynd cryd, "Fy!"</i><br><i>The sowtar ryght effeirly</i><br><i>Unto the feild he socht.</i>  |
| 185 | <p>Quhen thay wer servit of thair speiris,<br/>         Folk had aue feill be thair effeiris,<br/>         Thair haireis wer baith on flocht.<br/>         Thay sparrit thair hors on adir syd,<br/>         Sync thay atmoar the grand cowd glyd</p>                        | <i>Quhen thay wer servit of thair speiris,</i><br><i>Folk had aue feill be thair effeiris,</i><br><i>Thair haireis wer baith on flocht.</i><br><i>Thay sparrit thair hors on adir syd,</i><br><i>Sync thay atmoar the grand cowd glyd</i>   |
| 190 | <p>Than than togiddier brocht.<br/>         The talyeour was nocht weill sittin,<br/>         He left his sadell all beschittin<br/>         And to the grund he socht.</p>  | <i>Than than togiddier brocht.</i><br><i>The talyeour was nocht weill sittin,</i><br><i>He left his sadell all beschittin</i><br><i>And to the grund he socht.</i>  |
| 195 | <p>His birnes brak and maid aue brattill,<br/>         The sowtaris hors start with the rattill<br/>         And round about cowd reill.<br/>         The beist, that frayit wes ryght evill,<br/>         Ran with the sowtar to the Devill,</p>                            | <i>His birnes brak and maid aue brattill,</i><br><i>The sowtaris hors start with the rattill</i><br><i>And round about cowd reill.</i><br><i>The beist, that frayit wes ryght evill,</i><br><i>Ran with the sowtar to the Devill,</i>   |
- hammered hide*  
*naucally rubble*  
*cobbler-like; in manner*  
*oil burst out*  
  
*fairness tool*  
*Scarcely*  
*Within; such a stirring*  
*dinner; dearly*  
  
*before he rode farther*  
*of knighthood gave*  
  
*blackng*  
*repaid*  
  
*cobbler; fearfully*  
*sought*  
*equipped with their spears*  
*sense of their fear*  
*hearts; a-flutter*  
*toward the other side*  
  
*not at all well seated*  
  
*armor; clatter*  
*was startled; racket*  
*did covort*  
*badly frightened*

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- |     |  |   |
|-----|--|---|
| 200 | <p>Samthing from him the feynd eschewit,<br/>         He wend agane to bese bespewit,<br/>             So stern he wes in stell.<br/>         He thoscht he wald agane debait him,<br/>         He turnd his ers and all bedret him<br/>             Quyeit our from nek till heil.</p>      | <small>assailed<br/>expected; vomited upon<br/>valiant; in armor<br/>defend himself<br/>arose; besouled</small><br><small>All over from the neck to the heels</small> |
| 205 | <p>He lowosit it of with sic a reind<br/>         Baith hoes and man he strak till eird.<br/>             He fartit with sic ane feir.<br/>         "Now haif I quitt thee," quod Mahoun.<br/>         The new maid knycht lay into swoun<br/>             And did all armes forswet.</p>    | <small>fired it off with such a roar<br/>farted in such a fashion<br/>repaid</small><br><small>resonance<br/>sent them to the dungeon<br/>did strip</small>           |
| 210 | <p>The Devill gart thame to dungeon dryve<br/>         And thame of knychtheid cold depryve,<br/>             Dischairgeing thame of weir.<br/>         And maid thame harlotis bayth forevir,<br/>         Quhilk still to keip thay had fer leuir<br/>             Nor ony armes beir.</p> | <small>Banning them from warfare<br/>lowlyer<br/>to remain they greatly preferred</small>   |
| 215 | <p>I had mair of thair werkis writin<br/>         Had nocht the sewart bese beschittin<br/>             With Belliallis ers unblist.</p>   | <small>I would have more; death</small>   |
| 220 | <p>Bot that sa god ane boued me thoscht,<br/>         Sic solace to my haift it nocht,<br/>             For lawchtir neir I brust,<br/>         Quhairthow I walknit of my trance.<br/>         To put this in remembrance<br/>             Mycht no man me resist,</p>                      | <small>so good a jest<br/>Such joy; made<br/>laughing I nearly burst</small>  |
| 225 | <p>To dyte how all this thing befell<br/>         Befoir Mahoun, the air of Hell.<br/>             Schirris, trow it gif ye list!</p>  | <small>Through which I awakened<br/>(i.e., to record this tale)<br/>prevent<br/>relate<br/>(ord their)<br/>Sirs, believe it if you choose</small>                     |

78. *Of the Tailors and the Shoemakers*  
 [Telfouris and sewartaris, blist be ye]

Betwix twell hours and ellevin,  
 I dremmed an angell came fra hevin

(i.e., about midnight)

Poem 78: Of the Tailors and the Shoemakers

- With plesand stevin sayand on hie:  
"Telyouris and sowtaris, blist be ye.
- 5 "In Hevin hic ordand is your place  
Aboif all sanctis in grit solace,  
Nixt God grimest in dignicie:  
Tailyous and sowtaris, blist be ye.
- 10 "The cas to yow is nocht unkend;  
That God mismakkis, ye do amend  
Be craft and grit agilitie:  
Talyous and sowtaris, blist be ye.
- 15 "Sowtaen, with schone weill maid and meit  
Ye mend the faltis of ill maid feit,  
Quhairfoir to Hevin your saulis will fle:  
Talyous and sowtaris, blist be ye.
- 20 "Is nocht in all this fair a flyrok  
That hes upoun his feit a wyrok,  
Knowll tais nor mowlis in no deugie.  
Bot ye can hyd tham, blist be ye.
- 25 "And ye talyous, with weil maid clais  
Can mend the werist maid man that gais  
And mak him semely for to se:  
Talyous and sowtaris, blist be ye.
- 30 "Thocht God mak ane misfashionit swayne,  
Ye can him all schaip new agane  
And fassoun him betir be sic thre:  
Talyous and sowtaris, blist be ye.
- "Thocht a man haif a brokin bak,  
Haif he a gad telyour, qahattrak,  
That can it cuver with craftis sise:  
Talyous and sowtaris, blist be ye.
- pleasing voice saying on high  
*Tailors and shoemakers*
- Heaven high ordained  
*Above all saints in great joy*
- not unknown  
*That which God mis-makes*  
*By: great skill*
- shoes; fitting  
feet; ill-made feet  
*Therefore; souls will fly*
- fair (i.e., world); deformed person  
a corn  
*Arthritic toes nor chilblains*  
*hides*
- clothes  
goes
- Though; mis-fashioned fellow  
shape  
*fashion; by three times*
- [If he has a good tailor, no what*  
*cover with [his] subtle skill*

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15     "Of God grit kyndnes may ye clame  
That helpis His peple fra crake and lame,  
Supportand faltis with your supple:  
Tailyouris and sowataris, blist be ye.

From; claim  
deformity and lameness  
Curing flaws; assistance

40     "In erd ye kynth sic misakillis heit,  
In hevin ye sal be sanctis full cleir,  
Thocht ye be knavis in this cuntre:  
Telyouris and sowataris, blist ye be."

On earth you work such miracles here  
Even though you are servants

**79. *The Devil's Inquest***

[*Renounce thy God and cum to me*]

5     This nyght in my sleep I wes agast,  
Me thocht the Devill wes tempand fast  
The peple with aithis of crewaltie,  
Sayaed, as throw the mercat he past,  
"Renounce thy God and cum to me."

distressed  
tempting  
violent oaths  
through the market

10     Me thocht as he went throw the way  
Ane preist swerit be God verey  
Quhilk at the alter ressavit he.  
"Thow art my clerk," the Devill can say,  
"Renounce thy God and cum to me."

through  
priest swore by the true God  
Which he received at the altar  
clerk; did say

15     Than swoir ane courtyour nekle of pryd  
Be Chrystis windis, bludy and wyd,  
And be His harmes wes rent on Tre.  
Than spak the Devill hard him besyd,  
"Renounce thy God and cum to me."

courtier great of pride  
By Christ's wounds  
arms [who] was torn on the Cross  
close beside him

20     Ane merchand his geir as he did sell  
Renascit his pairet of Hevin and Hell.  
The Devill said, "Welcum mot thow be,  
Thow sal be merchand for myself.  
Renounce thy God and cum to me."

goods  
may  
shall be; for me

Poem 79: *The Devil's Inquest*

- Ane goldsmith said, "The gold is sa fyne  
 That all the workmanship I tyne —  
 The Feind ressaif me gif I lie."  
 "Think on," quod the Devill, "that thou art myne.  
 25 Resunce thy God and cum to me."
- Ane tailour said, "In all this toun  
 Be their ase beter weilmaid gous,  
 I gif me to the Feynd all fre."  
 "Gramercy, tolyour," said Mahoun,  
 30 "Resunce thy God and cum to me."
- Ane sowtar said, "In god effek,  
 Nor I be hangit be the nek  
 Gife bettir butis of ledder ma be."  
 "Fy!" quod the Feynd, "thow sairis of blek.  
 35 Ga clenge thee cleane and cum to me."
- Ane baxstar sayd, "I forsak God  
 And all His werkis, evin and od,  
 Gif fairar stuff neidis to be."  
 The Dyvill lache and on him cowth sod.  
 40 "Resunce thy God and cum to me."
- Ane fleschour swoir be the sacrament  
 And be Chrystis blad maist innocent,  
 Nevir fatter flesh saw man with e.  
 The Devill said, "Hald on thy intent,  
 45 Resunce thy God and cum to me."
- The maltman sais, "I God forsak,  
 And that the Devill of Hell me tak  
 Gif ony bettir malt may be,  
 And of this kill I haif inlaik."  
 50 "Resunce thy God and cum to me."
- Ane browstar swoir, "The malt wes ill,  
 Bath reid and reikit on the kill  
 That it will be na ill for me.

*pure*

*lose*

*take me if I lie*

*Reflect on [the fact]*

*Taylor*

*well-made*

*give myself*

*Great thanks; (i.e., the Devil)*

*shoemaker; be true*

*May I, by the neck*

*If better boots of leather may be*

*smell of blacking*

*cleanse; clean*

*baker*

*(i.e., completely)*

*If better provisions are required*

*laughed; did look*

*butcher*

*meat; eye*

*Retain those thoughts*

*malt-maker says*

*If*

*like I have [any] deficiency*

*brewer*

*discolored and smoke-tainted in the kiln*

*produce no ale*

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- 55 Ane boll will nocht sex gallonis fill."      *One measure for that mult;* six gallons make  
"Renunce thy God and cum to me."
- The smyth swoit, "Be rade and raip,  
In till a gallows mot I gaip.  
Gif I ten dayis wan pennys thee,  
For with that craft I can nocht thraig."  
60 "Renunce thy God and cum to me."
- Ane menstrall said, "The Feind me ryfe  
Gif I do oche bot drynk and swyfe."  
The Devill said, "Hardly mot it be —  
Evers that craft in all thy lyfe.  
65 Renunce thy God and cum to me."
- Ane dysour said with windis of styrfe  
The Devill mot stik him with a knyfe  
Bot he kest up fair syysis thre.  
The Devill said, "Endit is thy lyfe;  
70 Renunce thy God and cum to me."
- Ane theif said, "God, that evir I chaip,  
Nor ane stark widdye gar me gaip  
Bot I in Hell for geir wald be."  
The Devill said, "Welcum in a raip;  
75 Renunce thy God and cum to me."
- The fische wyffis flett and swoit with grans  
And to the Feind, saule, flesch, and banis  
Thay gaif thame with ane schowt on hie.  
The Devill said, "Welcum all att anis;  
80 Renunce thy god and cum to me."
- Me thocht the devillis als blak as pik  
Solistand wer as beis thik,  
Ay tempand folk with wayis sic.  
Rowndand to Robene and to Dik,  
85 "Renunce thy God and cum to me."
- By cross and rope  
Upon; may I gape  
If; won three pennies  
contend
- pierce  
anything except drink and copulate  
Thus must it be  
Practice
- dicer; words of anger  
Unless he fairly threw three nises
- escape  
a strong widdye (rope) makes me gape  
Hell's possessions  
to a rope
- fish sellers scolded; grans  
bones  
loud shout  
at once
- pitch  
Entwining were as thick as bees  
Always; sly method  
Whispering

Poem 80: Master Andro Kennedy's Testament

80. Master Andro Kennedy's Testament

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| I Mainter Andro Kennedy<br>Carro quando sum vocatus.<br>Gottis with sum incuby<br>Or with sum freie infatuacio,<br>5 In faith I can nought tell redly<br><i>Unde aut ubi fui natus.</i><br>Bot in treuth I know trewly<br><i>Quod sum dyabolus incarnatus.</i>  | Master Andrew<br><i>I run when I am called</i><br><i>Begotten by some demon</i><br><i>by a hairy friar</i><br><i>readily</i><br><i>By whom or where I was conceived</i><br><i>believe</i><br><i>That I am a fiend in human form</i>  |
| 10 <i>Cum nichil sit certius morte</i><br>We mon all de, man, that is done.<br><i>Nescimus quando vel qua sorte</i><br>Na Blind Allane wait of the mone.<br><i>Ego paucior in pectore,</i><br>This night I myght not sleep a wink.<br>15 <i>Licet eger in corpore,</i><br>Yit wald my mouth be wet with drinck. | Since nothing is more certain than death<br><i>must all die, a certainty</i><br><i>We do not know when or by what chance</i><br><i>No [more than]: knows of the moon</i><br><i>Therefore I suffer in my breast</i><br><i>(Although) I lie sick in body</i>                         |
| 20 <i>Nunc condo testamentum meum.</i><br>I leiff my saull forevirmare,<br><i>Per omnipotentem Deum,</i><br>Into my lordis wyne cellar,<br><i>Semper ibi ad remanendum</i><br>Qushill Domisday, without dissever,<br><i>Bonum vinum ad bibendum</i><br>With sueit Cuthbert that laffit me nevir.                | Now I make my testament<br><i>By almighty God</i><br><i>Always to remain there</i><br><i>Until the Day of Judgment: departing</i><br><i>Good wine to drink</i><br><i>sweet; loved</i>  |
| 25 <i>Ipsa est dulcis ad amandum.</i><br>He wald oft han me in his breith,<br><i>Der michi modo ad potandum,</i><br>And I forgiif him laith and wrath,<br><i>Quia in cellario cum corvis</i><br>30 I had lever lye, baith air and lait,<br><i>Nudus soles in somerio</i><br>Na in my lordis bed of stait,       | He is sweet for loving<br><i>curse me with his words</i><br><i>Let him just give me something to drink</i><br><i>hatred and wrath</i><br><i>Since in the cellar with bear</i><br><i>I would rather lie, both early and late</i><br><i>Naked except for my skirt</i><br><i>Than</i> |

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- A barell bung ay at my bosum,  
Of worldis god I bad na mair.  
*Corpus meum ebriosum*  
I leif onto the toun of Air,  
In a draf mydding forevir and ay,  
*Ubi ibi sepeliri quiesceam,*  
Quhar drink and druff may ilka day  
Be cassyne super faciem meam.
- I leif my hert that nevir wes sicit  
*Sed semper variabile,*  
That nevirement wald flow nor flicir  
Consorti meo Jacobe.  
Thought I wald bynd it with a wicir  
*Ferum deum renui.*  
Bot and I hecht to teme a bicker  
*Hoc pactum semper temui.*
- Syne leif I the best aucht I bocht  
(*Quod ex Latinum propter "coupe"*)  
To hede of kyn, bot I wait nougnt  
*Quis est ille, than I schrew my scawpe.*  
I callit my lord my heid, but hiddill,  
*Sed nulli alli hoc disverst.*
- We weir als sib as seve and riddill,  
*In una silva que creverant.*
- Omnia mea solacia*  
(That wer bot lesingis, all and ane)  
*Cum omni fraude et fallacia*
- I leif the master of Sanct Antane,  
*Willermo Gray, sine gratia,*  
Myne awne deir cusing, as I wene,  
*Qui manquam fabricat mendacio*  
Bot quhen the holyne growis gone.
- My fesyerning and my fale wynnyng  
*Relinquo falsis fratribus,*  
For that is Goddis awne bidding:
- stopper always  
desire  
My drunken body  
town of Air  
dunghill  
So that I may be buried there  
Where; drugs; every  
Be thrown over my face
- leave; constant  
But was always fickle  
always would waver or flicker  
Toward my companion Jacob  
Even though I would; wicker  
I denied the true God  
But if I promised to empty a cup  
This promise I always kept
- best thing I own  
Which is Latin for "coupe" (see note)  
(i.e., the head of the family); knew not  
Who he is, than I would curse my sculp  
without concealment  
But no others said this  
were as related as sieve and strainer  
That grew in one forest
- All my pleasures  
false things  
With every fraud and deceit  
Leave to the master of St. Anthony's  
without gratitude  
cousin, as I think  
Who never makes up lies  
Except when the holly is green
- deceit; dishonest profits  
I leave to the false friars

Poem 80: Master Andro Kennedy's Testament

- 70      *Dispensit, dedit pauperibus.*  
 For menis saulis thai say thai sing,  
 Mencientes pro maneribus.  
 Now God gif thaim ainc evill ending  
 Pro suis pravis operibus.
- 75      To Jok Fule my foly fre  
*Lego post corpus sepulturam.*  
 In faith, I am mair fule than he,  
*Licet ostendit bonum vestrum.*  
 Of corne and catall, gold and fe  
*Ipsa habet valde multam,*  
 And yit he blenit my lordis e  
*Fingendo cum fore stadtum.*
- 80      To master John Clerk synse  
*Do et lego retine*  
 Goddis malisone and myne.  
*Ipsa est causa mortis meae.*  
 85      Was I a dog and be a swyne  
*Meli mirantur super me,*  
 Bot I suld ger that lurdane quhryne  
*Scribendo dentes sine de.*
- 90      *Residuum omnium bonorum*  
 For to dispose my lond sail haif,  
*Cum ratiis puerorum —*  
 Ade, Kyte, and all the laif,  
 In faith, I will na langar raif.  
 95      *Pro sepultura ordinio*  
 On the new gys, sa God me saif,  
 Non niciet more solito.
- 100     *In die mee sepulture*  
 I will name haif bet our aunc gyng,  
*Et duos rusticos de rure*  
 Berand a baeill on a styng,  
 Drynskand and playand cog out evin,  
 Sicat ego met solebam.
- He distributed, he gave to the poor  
 lying [or exchange] for gifts  
 For their wicked deeds
- Jock Fool; foolishness freely*  
*I bequeath after my body is buried*
- Although he shows a good face*  
*livestock; goods*  
*He himself has a great deal*  
*eye*  
*By pretending to be a fool*
- near*  
*I do give and bequeath secretly*  
*cause*  
*He himself is the cause of my death*
- Many might wonder at me*  
*make that villain squeal*  
*By writing teeth without a "d" (?)*
- The remainder of all my goods*  
*dispose*  
*With the wardship of my children*  
*rest*  
*rent*  
*I will arrange for my burial*  
*In the new fashion*  
*Not after the usual custom*
- On the day of my burial*  
*own gang*  
*And two country peasants*  
*Carrying; pole*  
*chug-a-lugging*  
*As I myself was accustomed to do*

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- Singand and grotand with hic stevin,  
*Ponam meum cam fletu miscebam.*      sweeping with high voices  
*I mixed my drinking with tears*
- 105 I will na prentis for me sing  
*Dies illa, dies ire,*      desire no priests  
 Na yit na bellis for me ring,  
*Sicut semper solet fieri,*      That day, the day of wrath  
 Bot a bag pipe to play a spreng  
*Et usum all wesp astre me;*      As it always the custom to be done  
 Instayd of baneris for to bring  
*Quatuor flagonis cervis,*      now  
 Within the graif to set sic thing  
*In modum Crucis jecisse me,*      Four flagons of bear  
 110 To fle the fendis, than hardely sing  
*De terra plassanti me.*      grave  
*In the manner of the Cross next to me*  
 115      *Out of earth thou hast made me*

81. Dunbar's Dirge

- We that ar beir in hevynnis glorie  
 To you that ar in purgatorie  
 Commandis us on hartie wys —  
 I mene we folk of paradys  
 5 In Edinburgh with all merynes —  
 To yow at Striveling in distres,  
 Quhair nowdir plesour nor delyt is,  
 For pietie thon epistell wrytis.  
 O ye heremytis and askirsadillis  
 10 That takkis your pensance at your tabillis  
 And eitis no meit restorative  
 Nor drinkis no wyne confortative  
 Nor aill, bot that is thin and small,  
 With few coursis into your hill,  
 15 But company of lordis and knychtis  
 Or ony uther godlie wychtis,  
 Solitar walking your alone,  
 Seing nothing bot stok and stone;  
 Out of your panefull purgatorie  
 20 To bring yow to the blys and glorie  
 here (i.e., Edinburgh)  
 in a hearty manner  
 men  
 Stirling  
 neither  
 Out of pity; letter writers  
 anchorites  
 eat no meat  
 ale, except what is thin  
 Without [the] fellowship of  
 excellent people  
 Walking alone by yourself  
 stumps and stones

Poem 81: Dunbar's Dirge

- 25 Of Edinburcht, the myttic town,  
We shall begin ane cairfull sown,  
Ane dirige devout and meik,  
The Lord of blys doing beseik  
Yow to delyver out of your noy  
And bring yow sone to Edinburgh joy,  
For to be merye amangis us.  
The dirige begynneth thus:
- shall begin a sorrowful song  
*A dirge devout and mild*  
*bereaving*  
*discomfort*

*Lectio prima*

*First reading*

- 30 The Fader, the Sone, the Holie Gaist,  
The blisst Marie, virgen chait,  
Of angellis all the ordour nyne,  
And all the hevinlie court divyne  
Sone bring yow fra the pyne and wo  
Of Striveling, everie court manis foo,  
Agane to Edinburchts joy and blys,  
Quhair wirschip, welthe, and weifair is,  
Play, plesance eik, and honestie.  
Say ye amen, for chirritie.  
*Tu sistern, Domine.*
- blessed Mary*  
*nine orders*  
*from the pain and woe*  
*Stirling*  
*Where honor, prosperity*  
*Entertainment, pleasure also, and honor*  
*charity (i.e., love)*  
*Do Thou, oh Lord [have mercy on us]*

*Responsio*

*Response*

- 40 Tak consolatioun in your payne,  
In tribulatioun tak consolatioun,  
Out of vexatioun cum hame agayne,  
Tak consolatioun in your payne.  
*Habe, Domine, etc.*
- Give, oh Lord [Thy blessing]*
- 45 Out of distres of Stirling town  
To Edinburgh blys God mak yow bown.
- ready*

*Lectio secunda*

*Second reading*

- 50 Patriarchis, prophetis, apostillis deit,  
Confessouris, virgynis, and martyris clair,  
And all the saint celestiall,  
Devoitlie we upone thame call
- beloved*  
*Saints; shining martyrs*  
*celestial assembly*  
*Devoutly*

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- That sone out of your paynis fell  
 Ye may in hevin heir with us duell  
 To eit swan, cras, peirisk, and plauer,  
 And everie fische that swowmis in rever,  
 55 To drink withe us the new fresche wyne  
 That grew apon the revar of Ryne,  
 Fresche fragrant claretis out of France,  
 Of Angeo and of Orliaunce,  
 With many ayc cours of grit daynté.  
 60 Say ye amen, for chirrité.  
*Tir astre, Domine.*
- cruel pains*  
*here*  
*eat; partridge; plauer*  
*swims*  
*Rhine river*  
*Anjou; Orleans*  
*great delicacy*

*Responsio*

- God and Sanct Geill heir yow convoy,  
 Baythe sone and weill, God and Sanct Geill,  
 To sonce and seill, solace and joy,  
 65 God and Sanct Geill heir yow convoy.  
*Iube, Domine.*
- St. Giles bring you here*  
*soon and safely*  
*abundance and prosperity*  
*cruel pains*  
*may*
- Out of Stirling paynis fell  
 In Edinburgh joy sone mot ye dwell.

*Lectio tercia*

- We pray to all the sanctis in Hevin  
 That ar abuif the sternis sevis,  
 Yow to delyver out of your penitance,  
 That ye may sone play, sing, and dance  
 And into Edinburgh mak gad cheir  
 Quhair welthe and weiffair is, but weir.  
 75 And I that dois your paynis discryve  
 Thinkis for to visie you belyve,  
 Nocht in desert with yow to duell,  
 Bot as the angell Gabriell  
 Dois go betweyne fra Hevynis glorie  
 80 To thame that ar in Purgatorie,  
 And in thair tribulacions  
 To gif thame consolacions.
- saints*  
*are above the seven spheres*  
*without [af] doubt*  
*describe*  
*see you soon*  
*Not in [af] desert*  
*give them*

Poem 81: Dunbar's Dirge

- And schaw thame quhone thair pane is past  
 Thay sal to Hevin cum at the last.  
 show them when  
 shall
- 85 And how nane servis to have swetnes  
 That never taistit bittimes.  
 no one deserves; sweetness  
 tasted
- And thairfair how scould ye considir  
 Of Edinburgh blys quhone ye cum hiddir,  
 Bot gif ye taistit had befoir  
 90 Of Stirling toun the paynis soir?  
 And thairfair tak in patience  
 Your pessance and your abstinence.  
 And ye sal cum or Yule begyn  
 Into the blys that we ar in,  
 95 Quhilk grant the glorious Trinité,  
 Say ye amen, for chirrité.  
 Tu amem, Domine.
- come hither  
 Unless  
 sore pains  
 before

*Responsio*

- Cum hame and duell no mair in Stirling,  
 Fra hyddows hell cum hame and duell.  
 100 Quhair fische to sell is nane bot spyrting,  
 Cum hame and duell na mair in Stirling.  
 Iube, Domine.
- From hidens  
 Where; sparlings

*Et ne nos inducas in tentationem de Stirling  
 Sed libera nos a malo eludent.*

- 105 *Requiem Edinburgi dona eis, Domine.*  
*Et huius ipsius facias eis.*  
*A porta trinitatis de Stirling*  
*Ere, Domine, animas et corpora eorum.*  
*Credo gestare vitam Edinburgi*  
 110 *In villa viventium.*  
*Requiescant spiritus in Edinburgo. Amen.*

*Domine, exaudi orationem meam  
 Et clamor meus ad te veniat.  
 Oremus.*

115 *Deus qui iustos et cordis humiles ex eorum tribulatione  
liberare dignatus es; libera famulos tuos apud villam  
de Stirling versusas a peccatis et tristitia eiusdem, et ad  
Edinburgi gaudia feliciter perducas. Amen.*<sup>1</sup>

82. *The Two Cummers*  
[*This lang Lentrin it makis me lene*]

	Richt arely one Ask Wodnesday	Quite early on Ash Wednesday
	Denikande the wyne sat cummeris tua.	two gossip
	The tane couthe to the tothir compleene,	one did to the other
	Granand ande suppend couth sche say:	Grooming and sipping
5	"This lang Lentrin it makis me lene."	Lenten season; lass
	One couch befor the fyir sche sat.	<i>On [a] couch</i>
	God wot gif sche was greet and fat,	<i>God knows if</i>
	Yet to be feble sche did hir fene,	<i>pretend</i>
	Ay sche said, "Cummer, lat preif of that:	<i>let's prove [the truth] of that</i>
10	This lang Lentrin makis me lene."	
	"My fair stact cummar," quod the tothir,	<i>sweet friend (gossip)</i>
	"Ye tak that nesegimes of your modir.	<i>inherit your slenderness from your mother</i>
	Ale wyne to tast sche wald disdene	<i>All wine; disdain</i>
	Bot malmsey, and nay drink uther:	<i>Except Malmsey; never</i>
15	This lang Lentryt it makis me lene."	
	"Cummer, be glaid baith evin and morrow,	
	The gad quhanevere ye beg or borrow. <sup>2</sup>	

<sup>1</sup> Lines 103–18: *And do not lead us into the temptation of Stirling, / But deliver us from its evil. / Give them the peace of Edinburgh, Lord, / And let its light shine upon them. / From Stirling's gate of sadness, / Lord, bring forth their souls and bodies. / I believe I shall taste the wine of Edinburgh / In the city of the living. / May they shortly be at rest in Edinburgh, Amen. / Lord, hear my prayer, / And let my cry come to Thee. / Let us pray. / God, who deigns to free the just and the humble of heart from their tribulations, release Thy servants dwelling in the town of Stirling from all its pain and sorrow, and bring them joyfully to the bliss of Edinburgh, Amen.*

<sup>2</sup> *For the good things in life, wherever you get them*

Poem 83: *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

	Fra our lang fasting youse refrene And lat your husband die the sorrow. This lang Lentryn it makis me lene."	you must refrain endure
20	"Your counsaile, commar, is gad," quod scho. "Ale is to tene him that I do; In bed he is nocht worth a base. File anis the glas and drink me to: This lang Lentryn it makis me lene."	All I do is cause him to suffer not worth a base Fill [at] once
25	Of wyne out of ane chepin stoip Thair drank tua quartis, bot soip and soip. Of droucht sic axis did thame stren. Be thane to mend thair hed god hoip, That lang Lentryn said nocht mak thaim lene.	half-pint stoop sip after sip <i>Of thair such an excess; suffice</i> <i>By which to compensate they had high hopes</i> That lang Lentryn said nocht mak thaim lene.

83. *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

	"Schir Johine the Ros, ane thing thair is compil'd In generale be Kennedy and Quinting, Quhilk hes thame self aboilf the sternis styld. Bot had thay maid of marnace ony mynting. In speciall, sic strye sould rys but stynsing;	has been written in general [terms] by above the stars exalted if they had made; any threat should arise without end
5	Howbeit with bost thair beevisis wer als bendit As Lucifer that fra the hevin discendit, Hell sould nocht hyd thair hannis fra harmis hynting.	Although with pride; swollen fall from heaven heads from receiving harm
10	The erd sould trymbill, the firmament sould schaik, And all the air in vennaur soddane stink, And all the divillis of Hell for redour quak, To heir quhat I sould wryt with pen and ynk;	earth; heavens; shake venom suddenly fear quake bear what
15	For and I flyt, sum sege for schame sould sink, The se sould burn, the mone sould thoill ecclipsis, Rochis sould ryfe, the world sould hald no griffin, Sa loud of cair the commun bell sould clynk,	if I debate, some man set; burn; moon; suffer Rocks would crumble; fall apart loud of warning; ring
	Bot wondir laith wer I to be ane baird. Flyting to use richt gritly I eschame.	very loath were; bard To engage in flying; am ashamed

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- 20 For it is nowthir wynsynge nor reward,  
Bot tinsale baith of honour and of fame,  
Inches of sorrow, sklander, and evill name.  
Yit mycht thay be sa bald in thair bakkbytting  
To gar me ryne and raiis the foyn with flytting  
And throw all custreis and kierikis thaeme proclame." *Qued Dunbar to Kennedy*
- 25 "Dirtin Dunbar, qahome on blawis thow thy boist,  
Pretendand thee to wryte sic skaldit skrowis.  
Ransowd rebald, thow fall down att the roist  
My laureat lettres at thee and I lowis.  
Mandrag mymmerkin, maid maister bot in mows,  
30 Thrys scheild trampir with anc threibair goun,  
Say 'Duo mercy' or I cry thee doun,  
And leif thy ryming, rebald, and thy rowis.
- 35 "Dreid, dirtfast dearch, that thow hes disobeyit  
My couising Quintene and my commissar.  
Fantastik fale, trest weill thow sal be fleyit.  
Ignorant clif, aip, owl irregular,  
Skaldit skaithbird and commoun skamelar,  
Wasfukkit fusing that Natour maid anc yrele,  
Baith Johnis the Ros and thow sall squeill and skirle  
40 And evir I heir ocht of your making mair.
- 45 "Heir I put sylence to thee in all pairtin,  
Obey and ceis the play that thow pretendis,  
Waik walidrag and werlot of the caitis;  
Se sone thow mak my commissar arsendis,  
And lat him lay sax leichis on thy lendifis  
Meekly in recompansing of thi scorne,  
Or thow sall han the tyne that thow wes borne:  
For Kennedy to thee this codull sendis." *Quod Kennedy to Dunbar*

*Juge in the next quha got the war*

*In it is neither  
worthless trappings  
slanderous remarks  
cause me to rhyme  
countries, kingdoms*

*beshittis  
scabrous scrolls  
Foul-mouthed rascal; banquet  
worthy writings; if I loosed  
Mandrake dwarf; in score  
Thrice-explosed trickster  
'Mercy to God' before  
cease; ransel, roll*

*beemirched dwarf  
cousin; deputy  
fool, trust, put to flight  
ape, misshapen owl  
Scabby scavenger; sponger  
Misconceived foundling; dwarf  
skirk  
(C bear anything more; poetry*

*command; in all regions  
cease the game  
Weak wastrel and cart-varlet  
See [that] you stoow; assistant  
six leeches on your loins  
Meekly as recompence  
curse  
document*

Poem 83: *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

	"Iersche bryhour baird, vyle beggar with thy brattis,	Gaelic vagabond; rags
50	Cantbittin cradoun Kennedy, coward of kynd,	Impotent craven; by nature
	Evill-farit and deyit as Denserman on the ratis,	Ill-created, dried; <i>Dansishman</i> ; whelk
	Lyk as the gleddis had on thy gulessowt dynd,	<i>lyk</i> had dimed on your nose (see note)
	Mismaid monstour, ilk mone owt of thy mynd,	Missshapen; like a felon's
	Rensance, rebald, thy rytyng, thou bot roysis.	raves
55	Thy trechour tung has tane ane Heland steynd,	has assumed a Highland manner
	Ane Lawland ers wald mak a bettir noyis.	A Lowland arse would
	"Revin raggit rake, and full of rebaldrie,	Torn rugged rock
	Skitterand scorpions, scauld in scurilitie,	Befouling; scold
	I se the haitane in thy harlotrie	hauigkeit
60	And into othir science nothing slie.	Learning not or all skilled
	Of every vertew voyd, as men may sie.	see
	Quytclame cleerie and cleik to thee ane club,	Renounce learning; snatch
	Ane baird blasphemar in brybere ay to be.	A blasphemous baird; beggary
	For wit and wiisdomme ane wisp fra thee may rub.	a wisp [of straw]
65	"Thow speiris, daxtard, gif I dar with thoo fecht.	ask, villain, if, fight
	Ye, Dagone dowbart, thairof haif thow no dawt.	Fey, vile <i>Dagon</i> dimwit; doubt
	Quhairesir we meit, thairto my hand I hecht,	meet, pledge
	To red thy rebald rytryng with a rowt.	get rid of; blow
	Throw all Bretane it sat be blawin owt,	Throughout Britain; announced
70	How that thow, poysoneit pelour, gat thy paikis.	envenomed thief; got whipped
	With ane doig leich I schephe to gar thee schowt.	dog leash I intend to make you shod
	And nowther to thee tak kryfe, swerd, nor aix.	neither
	"Thow crop and rute of tratours tressonable,	(i.e., extreme example)
	The fathir and moder of morthour and mischeif.	murder and wrongdoing
75	Dissaitfull tynand with serpentis tung unstable,	Deceitful tyrant
	Cuckcold, cradoun coward, and commous theirf.	Cuckold; craven coward
	Thow purpest for to undo our lordis chieif	attempted
	In Paisday with ane poysone that wes fell,	poison; deadly
	For quilk, brybour, yit soll thow theill a breif.	vagabond; be summoned
80	Pelour, on thee I soll it preif myself.	Robber; prove myself
	"Thocht I wald lie, thy frawart phisoery	(i.e., even if I'm lying); vile body
	Dois manifest thy malice to all men,	reveal your malice
	Fy, tratour theirf, fy, glengoir loun, fy, fy!	syphilitic ruffian

The Works of William Dunbar

- 85 Fy, feyndly frost the fowlar than ane fen,  
My freyndis thow reprovit with thy pen.  
Thow leis, trastour, quhilk I sail on thee preif,  
Supposis thy heid war armit tymis ten,  
Thow sail recry it, or thy croon sail cleif.  
*fiendish face; fooler; middle  
friend; accused  
I.e., prove  
Even if; head; ten times  
retract; head shall be split*
- 90 "Or thow durst move thy mynd malitious,  
Thow saw the sail abone my heid up draw,  
Bot Eofus, full woid, and Nepturus.  
Mirk and moneles us met with wind and was,  
And mony hundred myll byne coud us blaw,  
By Holland, Seland, Yetland, and Northway coist,  
In sey desert quhair we wer famist aw.  
Yit come I haue, fals baird, to lay thy boist.  
*Before you dared speak; malicious  
sail above; was raised  
quite fierce  
Dark and moonless; wave  
miles hence did we blow  
Zealand, Sherland, Norway  
/the/ wild sea; all famished  
to put an end to*
- 95 "Thow callis thee rethore with thy goldin lippis,  
Na, glowrand gaipand fale, thow art begyld.  
Thow art hot glunnoch, with thy giltn hippis,  
That for thy louny mony a leisch hes fyld.  
Wan-visaged widdewow, out of thy wit gane wyld,  
Laithly and lowsy, als lauchtane as ane leik,  
Sen thow with wirscheg wald sa fane be styld,  
Hail, severane seycour, thy bawis hingis thow thy beik."  
*yourself a rhetorician  
staring gaping fool; deceived  
knobby-kneed (?); killed hips (?)  
villainy; lash has received  
Dark-faced corpse  
lice-ridden; loathsome; look  
Since; would so happily; styled*
- 100 105 "Forworthin fule, of all the world refuse,  
Quhat ferly is thocht thow rejoys to flyte?  
Sic eloquence as thay in Erichry use,  
In sic is sett thy thraward appetyte.  
Thow hes full limill full of fair indyse.  
110 I tak on me ane pair of Lowthiane hippis  
Sail fairar Inglis mak and mair parfyte  
Than thow can blabbar with thy Carrick lippis.  
*Deformed fool; rejected  
What a marvel it is  
Gaelic-speaking areas  
perverse  
sense of good writing  
I suggest that: Lothian  
Shall; English  
(i.e., Ayreshire)*
- 115 "Bettir thow ganis to leid ane doig to skomer,  
Pynit pykpuris pelout, than with thy maister pingill.  
Thow lay full peydles in the peis this somer  
*are naked; dog to poop  
Starved thief; strive  
peas; summer*

<sup>1</sup> Hail, sovereign lord, your balls hang out through your breeches

Poem 83: *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

- 120 And fane at evin for to bring hame a single,  
Syne rabb it at another auld wyvis ingle.  
Bot now in winter for purseth thou art traikit,  
Thow heis na breik to latt thy bellokis gyngill,  
Beg thee ane bratt, for haid, thow sal go naikit.
- 125 "Lene, larbar loungeour, lowsy is lisk and longe,  
Fy, skolderit skyn, thow art bot skyre and skrumple:  
For he that rostis Lawrance had thy grunye,  
And he that hid Sanct Johnis eue with ane wimple,  
130 And he that dang Sanct Augustyne with ane rample  
Thy fowl front had, and he that Bartilmo flaid.  
The gallowis gaipis eftir thy graceles grunill,  
As thow wald for ane baggeis, hungry gled.
- 135 "Cummerworld cradoun, na man comptis thee ane kers.<sup>1</sup>  
Sueir swappit swankly, swynekeper ay for swaitis,  
Thy commissar, Quintyne, biddis thee cum kis his ers,  
He havis nocht sic ane forlane loun of laittis,  
He sayis thow skaffis and beggis mair beir and aitis  
140 Not ony cripill in Caerik land abowt.  
Uther pure beggaris and thow for wage debaitis,  
Decrepit karlingis on Kennedy cryis owt.
- 145 "Mater aniwche I haif, I bid not fenyie,  
Thocht thow, fowl trumper, thus upon me leid.  
Corrupt carious, he sal I cry my senyie.  
Thinkis thow nocht how thow come in grit neid,  
Greitand in Galloway lyk to ane gallow breid,  
150 Raund and rolpand, beggand koy and ox.  
I saw thee thair into thy wathemanis weid,  
Quhilk wes nocht worth ane pair of auld gray sox.
- 155 "Ersch katherene, with thy polk breik and rilling,  
Thow and thy quene as gredy gleddis ye gang
- small bundle  
hearth  
poverty; wasted  
breeches; textiles jingle  
cloak
- sunburned; creased; wrinkled  
roasted St. Lawrence; stout  
eyes  
struck; fish tail  
foul face; St. Bartholomew  
nose  
baggage; kite
- Lazy drunken lout; beer  
assistant; arise  
useless uncouth fool  
scrounge; beg; beer and oats  
Than; Carrick  
poor  
old women
- enough; I need not pretend  
vile trickster; have lied  
lonely; my war-cry  
Have you forgotten  
Weeping; gallows breed  
Telling and croaking; cow  
poacher's garb
- Gaelic robber; bog; shoes  
wench like greedy kite you travel

<sup>1</sup> Lean, impotent lay-about, house-ridden in grot and loin

<sup>2</sup> Useless coward, no one accounts you fit to be worthif a piece of cress

The Works of William Dunbar

- With polkis to mylne and beggis baith meill and schilling.  
Thair is bot lys and lang nailis yow amang.  
Fowl heggirbald, fer henis thus will ye hang.  
150 These hes ane pertellus face to play with lambis.  
Ane thowsand kiddis, wyr thay in faldis full strang.  
Thy lyminair lake wald the thanse and their daenis.
- baggs to mill; back  
lice  
hedge-breaking thief (?); hens  
scury  
young goats; pens (folds)  
awful gaze; scare; mothers
- "Intill ane glen thow hes, owt of repair,  
Ane laithly huge that wes the lippir menis.  
155 With thee ane sowtaris wyle of blis als bair,  
And lyk twa stalkaris steilis in cokis and henis.  
Thow plukkis the pultré and scho pullis of the penis.  
All Kamik cryis, 'God gif this dowsy be drownd!'  
160 And quhen thow heiris ane guse cry in the glenis,  
Thow thinkis it swetar than sacryne bell of sound.
- laithly lodge; lepers  
cobbler's  
steal cocks and hens  
poultry; she pulls off; feathers  
God grant; she is to be  
a goose; glens  
sacred
- "Thow Lazarus, thow laithly lene tramort,  
To all the wrold thow may example be,  
To luk upon thy grysie, peteious port;  
For hiddowis, haw, and holkit is thyne ee,  
165 Thy cheikbane hair and blaiknit is thy ble.  
Thy choip, thy choll garris men for to leif chest;  
Thy gane, it garris us think that we mon de.  
I conjure thee, thow hungert Heland gaist.
- lean corpse  
grisly, painful face  
dark, and hollow; eye  
checkbones; darkened; complexion  
jane; jowl's cause; live chastely  
face; reminds us that we must die  
summon; famished Highland ghost
- 170 "The larbar linkis of thy lang lervye craig,  
Thy pure gynti thrott, peilit and owt of gly,  
Thy skoldenit skin, hewd lyk ane saffrone bag,  
Garris men dispyt that flesche, thow spreit of Gy.  
Fy, feyndly frost, fy, tykis face, fy, fy!  
175 Ay loungasd lyk ane loikman on ane ledder  
With hingit laik, ay wallowand upone wry,  
Lyk to ane stark theif glowrand in ane tedder.
- feeble bones; lean neck  
skinny; peaked and crooked  
sunburnt; colored; yellow  
Males; despise their; ghost of Gy  
foulish face; cur's  
waiting; hangman; ladder  
hanged look; moving crookedly  
staring; noose
- 180 "Nyse nagus nipaik with thy schalderis narrow,  
Thow linkis lowsy, loun of lousis aw,  
Hard burcheeson hipland, hippit as ane harrow,  
Thy rigbane rannis and thy ribbis on raw,  
Thy hunchis hirkis with hukebanis harth and haw,
- Foolish stingy cheapskate (miser)  
look bee-ridden; fool of all fools  
bulbiling hedgehog; fowly hips  
backbone; (shovel) in rows  
hipbones rough and coarse

Poem 83: *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

- Thy laithly lymis ar lese as oty treis.  
Obey, theif baird, or I sall brek thy gaw.  
Fowill carrybald, cry mercy on thy kneis.
- 185 "Thow pure, pynhippit, ugly averill  
With barkland basis holkaed thow thy lyd,  
Reistit and crynit as hangit man on hill,  
And oft bewakkit with aue ourhic tyd.  
Qahilk brewis mekle barret to thy bryd.  
190 Hir cair is all to clenge thy cabroch howis,  
Quhair thow lyis sawsy in saphron, bak and syd,  
Powderit with prymros, savrand all with clowia.
- "Forworthin wifing, I warne thee, it is wittin  
How, skytland skarth, thow hes the harle behind.  
195 Wan wraiglanc wasp, ma wormis hes thow beschittin  
Nor thair is gers on grund or leif on lind.  
Thocht thow did first sic foly to me fynd,  
Thow sailt agane with ma witnes than I.  
Thy gulsoch gane dois on thy bak it bind,  
200 Thy hostand hippis lattis nevir thy hos go dry.
- "Thow held the burch lang with aue borrowit goun  
And aue caprowsy barkit all with swquit,  
And quhen the laidis saw thee sa lyk a losa,  
They bickerit thee with mony bae and bleit.  
205 Now upaland thow levis on rabbit qahheit,  
Oft for aue caus thy burdclaih neidis no spredding  
For thow hes nowthir for to drink nor eit,  
Bot lyk aue berdies baird that had no bedding.
- "Strait Gibbons air, that nevir ounstred aue hers,  
Bla, berfute berne, in bair tyme wes thow borne.  
Thow bringis the Carrick clay to Edinburgh Cors,  
Upon thy botingis hobland, hard as borne.  
Stra wispis hingis owt quhair that the wattis ar worse,  
210 Cum thow agane to skar us with thy strais,  
We sall gar scale our scalis all thee to scorne  
And stane thee up the calsay quhair thow gais.
- laithly limbs; tree  
spirit  
monster; knees
- pitiful, thin-hipped; nag  
moving bones poking through  
*Dried and shriveled*  
drenched; high tide  
*causes much distress; bride*  
cleanse; scraggy hocks  
*be coated in yellow*  
scented; cloves
- Misshapen wretch (?); known*  
*befouled monster; diarrhea*
- wriggling; more
- Then there is grass on ground; leaf on tree*  
such filth attribute to me  
more witnesses  
*jaundiced face proves it*  
spewing hips; nose
- remained in the burgh*  
*garment darkened by sweat*
- ladd; rascal  
*heckled; baa and bleat*
- live on rubbed wheat*
- |                |         |
|----------------|---------|
| tablecloth     | nothing |
| beardless hand |         |
- heir; red spot
- Haunch, barefoot man; blad*
- Cross
- hobbling boots*
- welt
- scare; shrews
- affusion; schools
- stone; street; goes

The Works of William Dunbar

- 220 "Of Edinburch the boyis as beis owt thrasis  
And cryis owt, 'Hay, heir cumis our awin queir clerk!'  
Than fleis thow lyk ane howlat chest with cravis  
Qwhill all the bichis at thy botingis dois bark.  
Than carlingis cryis, 'Keip curches in the merk —  
Our gallowis gaipis — lo, qwhair ane greecles gais!'<sup>11</sup>  
Aneuthir sayis, 'I se him want ane sark —  
I Reid yow, cummer, tak in your lynning clair.'  
  
 225 "Than rynis thow down the gait with gild of boyis  
And all the town tykis hingand in thy heilis.  
Of laidis and lownis thair rynis sic ane noyis  
Qwhill ransyis rynis away with cairt and qheillis  
And cager aviris castis bayth coillis and creilis  
230 For reid of thee and rattling of thy butis.  
Fische wyvis cryis 'Fy!' and castis down skellis and skeilis,  
Sum claschis thee, sum cloddis thee on the cutis.  
  
 235 "Loun lyk Mahoun, be boun me till obey,  
Theif, or in greif mischeif sall thee betyd.  
Cry grace, tykis-face, or I thee cheeze and fley,  
Oule, rare and yowle, I sall defowill thy pryd,  
Peilit glod, baith fed and breed of bichis syd  
And lyk ane tyk, purspyk, quhat man settis by thee?  
Forflittin, countbittin, beschittin, barkit hyd,  
240 Clym ledder, fyle teder, foule edder, I defy thee!<sup>12</sup>  
  
 "Mauch matous, byt batoun, peilit glutoun, air to Hibous,  
Rank beggar, ostir dregar, flay fleggar in the flet.<sup>13</sup>  
Chittirlilling, ruch rilling, lik schilling in the milhouse,

<sup>11</sup> Lines 221–22: *Then old woman cry. "Keep your kerchiefs (flossery) hidden (in the dark) — / Our gallow gape (i.e., are empty) — lo, where an ill-favored lesser hawks (goats)?"*

<sup>12</sup> Lines 239–40: *Oudone in flyting, poised (cast-down/impotent/infected by venereal disease), filthy (beshtitten), scruffy (hardened skin). / Laddier-climber (i.e., one about to be executed), one who befools the hangman's noose, toothsome (rile, plague-infected) adder, I defy you*

<sup>13</sup> Lines 241–42: *Maggoty sheep, nipple-hitter, naked gluton, heir to a sheepshod (?) / Nasty-smelling beggar, oyster dredger, flea infestation in the hall*

Poem 83: *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

	Baird rebutor, theif of nator, fals tratour, feyindis gett, <sup>1</sup> Filling of tauch, rak sauch — cry crauch, thow art ourself! Matoun dryver, girmall ryver, yadswyvar, fowl fell thee! <sup>2</sup> Herretyk, hanatyk, perspyk, carlingis pet, Rottin crok, dirtin dok — cry cok, or I sall quell thee! <sup>3</sup>	old woman's fart ewe; befouled arse; kill
	<i>Quod Dunbar to Kennedy</i>	
245		
250	"Dathane, deivillis sone, and dragone dispitous, Abironis birth and bred with Belial, Wod werewolf, wombe, and scorpien vennemous, Lucifers laid, fowl feyindis face infernall, Sodomyt sypharen fra sanctis celestials, Pat I nocht sylence to thee, schipbird knaif?	Dathane; cruel abiron's child Insane werewolf; reptile lad separated from celestial saints shepherd's knife unew; rhyme and raze
255	And thow of new begynnis to ryme and raif. Thow sal be maid blair, bleir eit bestiall,	meek (sheep-like). Blear-eyed beast
260	"How thy forbear is come I haif a feill: At Cokburnispath, the wrat makis me war, Generit betuix ane scho-beir and a deill, Sa wes he callit Dewlbeir and nocht Dunbar, This Dewlbeir, generit on a meir of Mar, Wes Corspatrik, erle of Menche, and be illusious.	forbear was born; notion Cockburnspath; anger Engendered by a she-bear; devil Devil-bear mare of Mar Patrick, Earl of March; by
	Ther first that evir put Scotland to confusious Wes that fals tratour, hardely say I dae.	boldly I dare to say
265	"Quhen Bruce and Balioll differit for the crown, Scottis lordis could nocht obey Inglis lawis. This Corspatrik betrasit Berwik toon And slew sevin thousand Scottismen within thay swawis. The battall synce of Spottiswair he gart caus,	disputed English laws betrayed those walls afterward, caused
270	And come with Edward Langshanks to the field Quhair twelf thousand trew Scottismen wer keild And Wallace chest, as the carnicle schawis.	Edward Longshanks Where chased; chronicle

<sup>1</sup> Lines 243–44: *Pig guts, ill-made shoe, chaff-licker in the milhouse, / Filthiness “poet, “born thief, false traitor, spawn of a fiend*

<sup>2</sup> Lines 245–46: *Tallow-stuffing, scrotched sack (i.e., gallows bird) — epitome of defeat (or “beaten”), you are overcome! / Matoun driver, grain thief, mare bumper, evil befall you*

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- 275 "Scotis lordis chiftanis he gart hald and cheusone  
In firmance fast quhill all the feild wes done,  
Within Dunbar, that ald spelunk of tressone.  
Sa Inglis tykis in Scotland wes abone.  
Than spalyet thay the haly stane of Scone,  
The croce of Halynathous, and uthir jowellis.  
He bannis in Hell — body, banis, and bowellis —  
280 This Corspatrik that Scotland hes undone.
- held and accused  
cavendish  
den  
dogs; were in charge  
stole; holy stone  
cross; other jewels  
bones; bones
- 285 "Wallace gart cry ase counsale into Pert  
And callit Coespatrik tratour be his style.  
That dampret dragone drew him in desert  
And sayd he kend bot Wallace, king in Kyle.  
Out of Dunbar that theif he maid exyle  
Unto Edward and Inglis grand agane.  
Tigris, serpentis, and taidis will remane  
In Dunbar wallis, todis, wolffis, and beitis wyle.
- summoned; Persh  
by his title  
damned; approached; desert  
knew only  
exiled  
tigers; toads; remain  
foxes; wily beasts
- 290 "Na fowlis of effect amangis tha binkis  
Biggis nor abydis, for nothing that may be.  
Thay stanis of tressone as the brantstane stinkis.  
Dewlbeiris moder, cassin in by the se  
The warriet spill of the forbiddin tre  
That Adame eit quhen he tint Parradyce,  
295 Scho eit, invennomis lyk a cokketryce,  
Syns merreit with the divill for dignite.
- birds of vane; those mounds  
Builds or dwells  
Those stones; brimstone  
Devil-beer's mother, east; sea  
accursed apple  
ate when he lost Paradise  
She ate, poisonous  
Then married
- 300 "Yit of new tressone I can tell thee tailis  
That cumis on nycht in visioan in my sleep:  
Archebauld Dunbar betraund the hous of Hailis  
Becaus the yng lord had Dunbar to keip;  
Pretendand throw that to thair rowmis to creip,  
Ryght crewaly his castell he persewir,  
Brocht him furth boundin and the place reskewit,  
Sett him in fetteris in ase dungeon dip.
- Tales  
come at night  
betrayed  
protect  
Pretending through; rooms  
cruelly; attacked  
recovered
- 305 "It war aganis bayth sater and god ressoan  
That Dewlbeiris baimes wer trew to God or man,  
Quhilikis wer baith gottin, borne, and bred with tressoun,
- war against  
Devil-beer's children  
begotten

Poem 83: *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

- Belgebabbis oyis and cust Corspatrikis clan.  
 Thow wes prestyt and ordanit be Sathan  
 For to be borne to do thy kin defame  
 And gat me schaw thy antecessouris schame.  
 Thy kin that leivis may wary thee and ban.
- Berizebab's offspring  
 made a priest; ordained by  
 disgrace  
 cause me to show  
 liver; curse
- 310
- "Sen thow on me thus, lymer, leis and trattillis,  
 And fyndis sentence foundit of invy,  
 Thy elderis basis ilk nycht rysis and rattillis:  
 Apon thy coes vengeance, vengeance thay cry —  
 Thow art the cause thay may not rest nor ly.  
 Thow sais for thame few psaltris, psalmis, or credis  
 Bot geris me tell thair trestalis of mysdedis  
 And thair ald sin wyth new schame certify.
- reval, lies; charters  
 orient statements stemming from envy  
 banished elders each; cry  
 body  
 say  
 make; trental masses
- 315
- "Insensuate sow, cesse, false Eustase air,  
 And knew, kene scald, I bald of Alathya,  
 And cause me not the cause lang to declare  
 Of thy curst kyn, Deslber and his allya.  
 Cum to the Croce on kneis and mak a crya,  
 Confesse thy crime, bald Kenydy the king,  
 And wyth anc haathorne scarge thyself and dyng.  
 Thus dree thy penaunce wyth deliquisti quida.
- Unfeeling sow; cease; heir  
 bold liar; hold with  
 long hair  
 Devil-bear; allies  
 Cross; knees; public statement  
 strike  
 suffer; because you have sinned
- 320
- "Pas to my commissare and be confess,  
 Cour before him on kneis and cum in witt,  
 And sync ger Stobo for thy lyf protest.  
 Resonuce thy rymis, bath ban and birm thy bill,<sup>1</sup>  
 Heve to the hevyn thy handis ande bald thee still.  
 Do thou not thus, bogane, thou sal be breyat  
 Wyth pik, fire, ter, gun paldre, and bynt  
 On Artharis Sete or on ase hyar hyll.
- deputy; confessed  
 Cower; be humble  
 then make
- 325
- "I perambalit of Pernaso the moetayn,  
 Enspirit wyth Mercury fra his goldyn spere,  
 And dulcely drank of eloquence the fontayne
- Raise  
 If you do not do this, follow; burn  
 pitch; tar; flay  
 Arthur's Seat; higher hill
- walked upon; mountain  
 inspired by; sphere  
 sweetly; fountain

<sup>1</sup> Retract your poems, both ban and burn thy letter.

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- 340 Quhen it was purifit wylt frost and flowlit clere.  
And thou come, fale, in Marche or Februere  
Thare till a pale and drakn the padok rod  
That gerris the ryme into thy termes glod  
And blaberis that noyis mensis eris to here.
- 345 "Thou hufis nane brische, elf, I understand,  
Bot it suld be all trew Scottis mensis lede.  
It was the gad langage of this land  
And Scotta it causit to multiply and spedde  
Quhill Corspatrik, that we of tresoun rede.
- 350 Thy forefader, maid frisch and Irisch men this,  
Throu his tresoun broght Inglyse rumplis in.  
Sa wald thyself, mycht thou to him succede.
- "Ignorant fale, into thy mewis and mokis  
It may be verifyit that thy wit is thin;
- 355 Quhare thou writis 'Densmen dryit upon the ratis,'  
Densemmen of Denmark ar of the kingis kys.  
The wit thou suld have had was castin in  
Evyn at thyne ers bakwart wylt a staf stong.  
Herefore, false harlot harsone, hold thy tong.
- 360 Deulbere, thou devis the devill thyne crine wylt dyn.
- "Quharean thou said that I stall bennis and lammys,  
I latt thee witt I have land, store, and stakkis.  
Thou wald be fayn to graw, lad, wylt thy gammys  
Under my bunt smoch hanis behynd doggis bakkis.
- 365 Thou has a tome pures, I have stedis and takkis;  
Thou tynt cultar, I have cultar and pleusch.  
For substance and gorye thou has a wedy touch  
On Mount Falconis about thy crag to rae.
- "And yit Mount Falconis gallowis is our fair  
370 For to be fyld wylt sik a fruteles face.  
Curn hame and hyng on oure gallowis of Aire —  
To erd thee under it I sall puechas grace;  
To ete thy flesh the doggis sall have na space.
- fool  
pool; toad spawn  
makes; gloomy figures (?)  
Mabs what annoys man's ears
- You have no love for Gaelic  
language
- Scotta (a woman)  
Until, speed
- English rump (fish tails)
- fool, foolery and mocking
- Domes dried upon the wheel
- Totally; arise; sing staff  
Therefore; whoreson  
deafens; uncle; noise
- Whereas; stole here; Lands  
house, stores, and stacks  
happy; jaws  
table smashed bones (?)
- empty; farms and holdings  
lack [a] plowshare; the whole plow  
property; hangman's noose  
neck to stretch
- no good  
defiled by such a worthless  
hang  
bury, permission

Poem 83: *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

- 375     The ravyns shall ryve nathing bot thy tong natis.<sup>1</sup>  
 For thou sik malice of thy maister matis,  
 It is wele sett that thou sik barat brace.
- 380     "Small fynance amang thy frendis thou beggit  
 To stanck the storm wyl haly muldys thou leste.  
 Thou sailit to get a dowcare for to dredg it,  
 It lyis closit in a clout on Seland cost.
- 385     Sik seale geiris thee be servit wylh cald rost  
 And sitt ansoupin off beyond the sey  
 Criast "caritas," at duris, "amore Dei."<sup>2</sup>  
 Basefut, beckeles, and all in duddis updot.
- 390     "Dealbere has not ado wylh a Dunbar.  
 The erlis of Murray bare that surname ryght,  
 That evytrew to the king and constant ware,  
 And of that kyn come Dunbar of Westfelde knyght.
- 395     That successione is hardy, wyse, and wicht  
 And has nathing ado now wylh the Devile.  
 Bot Deulbere is thy kyn and kennis thee wele  
 And has in Hell for thee a chaamir dicht.
- 400     "Cursit croppand craw, I shall get crop thy tong  
 And thou shall cry cor mandan on thy kneis.  
 Duerch, I shall dyng thee quhill thou dryne and dong,  
 I shall degrace thee, graceles, of thy greis.
- 405     Scalle thee for scorne and shere thee of thy scale,  
 Ger round thy hefe, transforme thee till a fule,  
 And syn for tresone trone thee to the treis.
- 410     "Raw-mowit ribald, renegate rebatoer,  
 My linage and forebearis war ay lele.  
 It cumis of kynde to thee to be a traytoure,  
 To ryde on nyght, to rag, to reve and stede.

matris

flyting; neck agony embrace

calm; body aches

tried; diver; dredge

bey enclosed; cloth; coast

conduct caused; cold roast

unfed; sea

pantsless; tattered clothes

working to do

earth; bore; properly

brave

chamber reached

Cursed croaking crow; snip  
clean heart; knees

Dwarf; list; until; poop

fick; swear; lies

take from you; villain; degrace

Strip; remove; learning

Shave around; fool

the you to the gallows (?)

Foul-mouthed ruffian; villainous renegade

were always loyal

comes naturally for

grab; take

<sup>1</sup> The ravens shall tear nothing except your tongue's roots (i.e., throat)

<sup>2</sup> Crying "charity," at doors, "by the love of God"

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- 405 Quhare thou putis poysoun to me, I appelle<sup>1</sup>  
 Thee in that part — preve it, pelour, wyth thy persone!  
 Clame not to clergy, I defy thee, gersone.  
 Thou sal by it dere wyth me, duerche, and thou deile.<sup>2</sup>
- prove it, thief  
benefit of clergy; fellow
- 410 "In Ingland, oule, sald be thyne habitacione.  
 Homage to Edward Langschankis maid thy kyn,  
 In Dunbar thai resavat hym, the false racione:  
 Thay sald be exilde Scotland, mare and myn.  
 A stark gallowsis, a wedy, and a pyn  
 The hede poynt of thyne elderis armes ar,  
 415 Wrytten above in poesi: "Hang Dunbar,  
 Quarter and draw, and mak that sumname thin!"
- oule  
made  
people  
exiled [from]; each and all  
rope; peg  
coat of arms are  
above in verse  
few in number
- 420 "I am the kingis blade, his trew speciall clerk  
 That nevir yit ymaginit hym offense,  
 Constant in myn allegiance, word, and work,  
 Ousely dependand on his excellencie,  
 Traistand to have of his magnificencie  
 425 Gacerdoun, reward, and benefice bedene  
 Qahen that the ravyns sal ryve out bath thine eue  
 And on the ratis sal be thy residence.
- imagined offending him  
  
Trusting  
Recompence; benefice wholly  
peck; eyes  
wheel of execution
- 430 "Fra Etrike Forest firthward to Drumfres  
 Thou beggit wyth a pardoun in all kirkis  
 Collapis, cruddis, mele, grotis, grisis, and geis.  
 Most, curdi, mead, grain, herbe, geese  
 And onder nyght quhile stall thou staggis and stirkis.  
 Because that Scotland of thy begging irkis,  
 435 Thou scapis in France to be a knycht of the felde;  
 Thou has thy clamschellis and thy bardoun kelde —  
 Unhonest wayis all, wolroun, that thou wirkis.
- Ettrick Forest; Dumfries  
churches  
at night stole; livestock  
gross weary  
escape into  
clamshells; staff  
runcal (?)
- 440 "Thou may not pas Mount Barnae for wilde bestis,  
 Nor wyn throu Mount Scarpee for the snawe;  
 Mount Nycholas, Mount Godart — thare arestis
- beast  
captures

<sup>1</sup> Whereas you accuse me of poisoning, I charge

<sup>2</sup> You shall buy it dearly, dwarf, if you deal with me

Poem 83: *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

- Brigantis sik bois and blyndis thame wyt a blawe,    *Robbers such lady [as you]; blow*  
 In Parise wyt the maister buriaw  
 Abyde, and be his prentice nere the bank,  
 And help to hang the pece for half a frank,  
 440 And at the last thyself sall thole the lawe.    *Paris; hangman  
apprentice near  
each one  
suffer*
- "Haltane harlot, the devill have gade thou hais?  
 For fault of puissance, pelour, thou mon pak thee.  
 Thou drask thy thrift, sold and wedsett thy clais.  
 Thare is na lorde that will in service tak thee.  
 445 A pak of flaskynnis fynance for to mak thee  
 Thou sall ressave in Danskyn, of my tailye;  
 With *De profundis* fend thee, and that failye,<sup>1</sup>  
 And I sall send the blak devill for to bak thee.
- "Into the Katryne thou maid a foule calste,  
 450 For thou bedrate hir down fra stene to stene.  
 Apon hir sydis was sene thou coad schute —  
 Thy dirt clevis till hir towis this twenty yere.  
 The firmament na firth was nevir cler  
 Quhill thou, Deulbere, devillis birth, was on the see.  
 455 The saulis had sonkyn throu the syn of thee  
 Wer not the peple maid sa grete prayere.
- "Quhen that the schip was saynit and undir sail,  
 Foul brow, in hell thou preposit for to pas.  
 Thou schot and was not sekir of thy tayle,  
 460 Beschate the stene, the compas, and the glas.  
 The skipper bad ger land thee at the Bas.  
 Thou spewit and kest out morey a laithly lomp  
 Faster than all the marynaris coad pompe,  
 And now thy wause is wers than evir it was.
- "Had thai bene prouait sa of schote of gane  
 By men of were, but perile thay had past.  
 As thou was louse and redy of thy bane,  
 465    *Katherine (to ship); made a foul cabin  
befouled her from stem to stern  
did "shoot" (excrete)  
excrement adheres; ropes  
sly nor cuntry  
spawn; sea  
rods  
Had not*
- signed (blessed)  
face; ship's hold; intended  
timed; former of your behind  
Befouled the helm  
ordered you off at Bass Rock  
cast out; loathly lump  
mariners could pump  
belly
- "Had thai bene prouait sa of schote of gane  
 By men of were, but perile thay had past.  
 As thou was louse and redy of thy bane,  
 465    *provided  
war, without equal; surpassed  
louse; rear-end*

<sup>1</sup> With "Out of the depoks" defend yourself, and if that fails

*The Works of William Dunbar*

- Thay mycht have tane the collum at the last,  
For thou wald cok a cartfall at a cast.
- 470 There is na schip that wil thee now resave,  
Thou fylde faster than fyfenesam mycht lawe,  
And myrit thaym wyth thy muk to the myd-mast.
- "Throu Ingland, thef, and tak thee to thy fute,  
And boun with thee to have a false botward.  
475 A horse marshall thou call thee at the maste  
And with that craft convoy thee throu the land.  
Be nathing argh, tak ferily on hand.  
Happyn thou to be hangit in Northumbir,  
Than all thy kyn ar wele quyte of thy cumbit.  
480 And that mon be thy dome, I undirstand.
- "Hye souverase loede, lat nevir this synfull set  
Do schame fra hame unto your nacion!  
Lat nevir name sik ane be callit a Scot,  
A rottyn crok, louse of the dok, thare doan!  
485 Fra honest folk devoide this lathly lown  
In sum desert quhare thare is na repaine;  
For fylng and infelching of the aire,  
Cary this cankerit corrupt cariou.
- "Thou was comasvit in the grete eclips,  
490 A monstir maid be god Mercurius,  
Na hald agayn, na hoo is at thy hips.  
Infortunate, false, and furias,  
Evill-schryvin, wanthryvin, not clene na curius.  
495 A myten full of flyting, flyrdom like,  
A crabbit, scabbit, evill facit messian tyke,  
A schit but wit, schir and injurius.
- "Greit is the glaykis, gade maister Gilliam gakkis,  
Our imperfyte in poetry or in prose.  
All clocis undir cloud of ryght thou cakkis.  
500 Rymis thou of me, of rhetory the rose?  
Lunatike lymare luscbald, louse thy hose  
That I may touch thy tone wyth tribulation
- captured the ship (?)  
excrete  
receive  
defiled; fifteen; clean up  
soiled; muck; mid-mast
- (Gaf through England; feet  
prepare; riding-crop (?)  
law-court
- not hesitant, go briskly  
*If it happens that you are hanged*  
*Then; this will be well rid; encumbrance*  
*must be your fate*
- fool  
at home  
such (a) one  
diseased ewe, loose of the bowels  
cast out this loathsome rascal  
from which there is no escape  
defiling and infecting  
Take away
- conceived during  
by  
*Nor hald; no hald*  
III-fortuned; violent  
*Unforgiven, undergrown; nor skilled*  
*A quarrelsome dwarf, an object of scorn*  
*crabby, scabby, ugly lapdog*  
*A shit without wit, vacant (?)*; harmful
- trickery; William the fool  
Overly flawed  
Enclosed; defecates  
*Do you write about me; rhetoric*  
*Crazy drunken fool (?)*, loose  
bottom; affliction

Poem 83: *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

	In recompensing of thy conspiration, Or tarse thee out of Scotland — tak thy chose!	conspiracy take yourself
505	"Ane benefice quha wald gyve sic ane beste Bet gif it war to gyngill Judas bellis? Tak thee a fidill or a floyste, and gese! Undought, thou art ordanyt to not ellis. Thy clostit cloke, thy skryp, and thy clarschellis	who would give to such a heart Unless; jingle Judas' belly fife; play worthless fellow; nothing else patched; pilgrim's wallet
510	Cleke on thy cors, and fare on into France. And cum thou nevir agayn but a mischance. The Fend fare wyth thee forthward over the fellis.	Put on thy body; go without misfortune <i>The Devil; over the hills</i>
515	"Cankrit Caym, tryit trowane Tetivillas. Marmaidyn, mymerken, monsir of all men, I sall ger bake thee to the lard of Hillhouse To suelly thee in stede of a pullit hen. Fowmart, fasert, fastirit in filth and fen,	Poxsome Cain; treant fiend Mermaid; dwarf have you baked for the lord swallow; plucked
520	Fosale fond, fiend fale, apon thy phisnom fy! Thy dok of dirt drepis and will nevir dry. To tame thy tone it has tyrit carlingis ten.	Polecat; coward; midden Vile fool; face urse drips with excrement <i>scrib your bottom; tired out ten old women</i>
525	"Conspirator, curvit cocatrice, hell caa, Turk trumper, traitor, tytan intemperate. Thou irefull attircop, Pilate aportata, Judas, Jew, juglour, Lollard launcate, Sarazene, Symonyte provit, pagane pronunciata,	hellish jackalow Fiendish deceiver (infidel) angry spider; misbeliever Jew; conjurer; chief heretic Saracen, Sononite; declared pagan
530	Machoesete, manesuorne, bugrist abhorribile, Devill, dampnit dog, sodomyte insatiable, With Gog and Magog grete glorificate.	Devil; perjurer; buggerer <i>worshiper of demons</i>
535	"Nero thy ngvow, Golias thy gransire, Pharae thy fader, Egipsa thy dame, Deulbore, thir at the caisin that I conspire. Terryganis tempise thee, and Vaspasius thine erne, Betezbub, thy fall boothir, will claime	descendant, Goliath father; mother <i>these are charges I allege</i> Fiend incite; uncle claim
	To be thyne air, and Cayphas thy sectour, Pinto thy hede of kyn and protectour, To Hell to lede thee on lyght day and lone.	heir; executor <i>head of family</i> <i>by daylight or by torchlight</i>

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- 540 "Herode thyne othir cme, and grete Egeas,  
Marciane, Machomete, and Maxencius,  
Thy trew kyndissem Antenor and Eneas,  
Throp thy nece nece, and austern Olibrius,  
Putidew, Baal, and Eyobulas —  
Thir fendas ar the flour of thy four brachis,  
Sterand the potis of Hell and nevir stanchis.  
Dout not, Deulbere, tu es dyabolus!"
- uncle  
kinsmen  
niece; stern  
*These fiends are  
stirring; cease  
Doubt; you are a devil!*
- 545 "Deulbere, thy spere of were but feir thou yeilde ..."¹  
Hangit, mangit, edie-stangit, strynde stridorum — silly, adder-stung; offspring of fools  
To me, maist hie Kenydie, and flee the felde.  
Pricket, wicket, conwickit lamp Lollardorum,  
Defarryt, blamyt, schamyt primar paganaorum,  
550 Out, out, I schout, upon that snowt that snevillis!  
Tale tellare, rebellare, induellar wyth the devillis,  
Spynk, sink wyth stynk ad Tertera Termagorum." to the hell of the Termagi (devils)  
*Quod Kennedy to Dunbar*

Juge ye now heir quba got the war

84. *The Treis of the Twa Maris Wemen and the Wedo*

- Apon the Midsummer Evin, murrast of nichtis,  
I muvit furth allane in meid as midnicht wes past  
Besyd ane gadlie grein garth full of gay flouris,  
Hegot of ane huge hicht wth hawthorne treeis.
- 5 Quhairon ane bird on ane braische so birst out bir notis  
That never ane blythfullar bird was on the beuche hard.  
Quhat thow the vagarat sound of bir sang glaid  
And thow the savour sanative of the sueit flouris,  
I drew in dense to the dyk to dirkin efter mirthis.
- 10 The dew donkit the dailt and dynnit the feedis.  
I hard under ane holyn bevinlie grein bewit  
Ane hic speiche at my hand wth hautand wourdis.
- Midsummer's Eve  
of meadow  
enclosed garden  
Hedged; height  
Where; notes  
happier; though heard  
Because of; sweet  
wholesome fragrance  
in secret; wall; seek  
mixtured; the birds sang  
heard; holly; bad  
holly conversation; houghtry

¹ Devil-hour, your spear of war doubtless you must yield (i.e., you are defeated)

Poem 84: *The Tretis of the Twa Marit Wemen and the Wedo*

	With that in haist to the hege so hard I inthrang That I was heldit with hawthorne and with beynd leveis. Theow pykis of the plet thorne I presandis leikit Gif ony persone wald approche within that plesand garding.	Then; into the hedge; thorn hidden; pleasant spikes; woven; looked green (fresh)
15	I saw the gay ladeis sit in ane grein arbeir All geclothed into garlandis of fresche gadlie flouris. So glitterit as the gold wer their gloriouſ gilt tressis. <sup>1</sup> Qeſhill all the gressis did gleme of the glaid hewis.	bedecked with garlands
20	Kementit war their cler hair and curiositie sched Attour their schulderis doan schyre schyning full bricht With curches cassin their abone of kimp cleir and thin. Their mantillis grein war as the gres that grew in May sessoun.	Combed; artfully arranged Above; clearly Archchief cast above; grace season
25	Fetrit with their quhyt fingeris about their fair sydis. Of ferfulle fyne favour war their faceis meik, All full of florist fairheid as flouris in June — Quhyt, seimlie, and soft as the swet lillies	Held by; white fingers wonderously lovely; gentle flourishing beauty White, lovely
30	Now upspred upon spray as new spyniſt rose. Arrayit ryallie about with mony riche wardour That Nature full nobillie armalit with flouris, Of alkin hewis under hevin that ony beynd knew.	opened royally; gremory adorned every color; person
35	Ane cumlic tabil coverit wes befori tha cler ladeis With ryalle cowpis apon rawis full of ryche wynis. And of thir fair wlonkis tua weddit war with lordis, Ane was ane wedow, iwis, wantous of laitis.	those bright cups in rows these lovely ladies indeed, merry in manner
40	And as thai talk at the tabill of mony taill sindry, Thay wauchtit at the wicht wyne and waris out woudis, And syn thai spak more spedelie and sparit no matiris.	of various things quaffed; passed vigorously
45	"Bewrie," said the wedo, "ye woddit wenes yng. Quhat mirth ye fand in maryage sea ye war menis wyffis. Reveill gif ye rewit that rakles condicoun, Or gif that ever ye luffit leyd upone lyf mair Nor thame that ye your fayth hes festinit forever, Or gif ye think, had ye chois, that ye wald cheis better.	Reveal; wedded; young (if regretted; reckless loved another man more Than the one that choice; choose

<sup>1</sup> So glistened like gold were their glorious gilt tresses

*The Works of William Dunbar*

	Think ye it nocht aye blist band that bindis so fast That none undo it a dril may bot the deith aye?"	<i>blessed bond</i> <i>a bit; except death alone</i>
50	Then spak aye lusty belyf with lustie effeis: "It that ye call the blist band that bindis so fast Is bair of blis and baifull and greit barrat wirkis. Ye speit, had I fre chois, gif I wald cheis bettie — Chemycis ay as to eschew and changeis ar sueit. Sic cursit chance till eschew, had I my chois aris, Out of the cheitycis of aye charle I chaip suld forevir. God, gif matrimony wer made to hell for aye year! It war bot merrins to be mair bot gif our myndis plesit. It is agane the law of luf, of kynd, and of nature Togidder harts to strene that stryveis with uther. Birdis hes aye better law na bernis be meikill, That ilk year, with new joy, joyis aye makil, And fangis thame aye fresche feyr, anfalyteit and constaent, And lattis thair fulycit feiris flie quhair thai pleis. Cryst, gif sic aye connactade war in this kith haldin, Than weill war us wemen that evir we war born! We suld have feiris aye fresche to fang quhen us likit, And gif all laubaris thair leveis quhen thai cunage. <sup>1</sup> Myself suld be full semlie in silkis arrayit, Gymp, jolie, and gest, richt joyus and gent.	<i>lusty lady soon; lively manner</i> <i>painful, trouble produces</i> <i>You will</i> <i>Chain; changes; sweet</i> <i>Such cursed fortune; once</i> <i>escape</i> <i>God, (if only); last; year</i> <i>(af vexation; unless</i> <i>against; nature</i> <i>Hearts to constrain</i> <i>than man by far</i> <i>each year; enjoy a mate</i> <i>sake; mate, artwork</i> <i>ased up; companions</i> <i>custom way; land held</i>  <i>companions; embrace</i>
60	I suld at fairis be found new faceis to se, At playis and at preichingis and pilgrymages greit, To schaw my renome roaly quhair pris was of folk, To manifest my makdom to multitude of pepill And blaw my bewtie on braid quhair bernis war mony. <sup>2</sup>	<i>Graceful; elegant</i>
65	That I micht cheis and be chosin and change quhen me lykit. Than suld I waill aye full weill our all the wyd realme That suld my wemanheid weild the lang winter nicht, And quhen I gottin had aye grosse, ganest of uther, Yap and yng, in the yok aye year for to draw,	<i>high repute; press</i> <i>display my loveliness</i>
70	Fra I had peevit his pitit the first plesand moneth,	<i>choose; (from) over</i> <i>enjoy</i>
75		<i>fellow, better than the others</i>
80		<i>Eager and young; yoke one year</i>
		<i>After; tested his virility</i>

<sup>1</sup> And give all impotent men their walking papers when they lack heartiness (potency)

<sup>2</sup> And proclaim my beauty abroad where men were numerous

Poem 84: *The Tretis of the Twa Marit Wemen and the Wedo*

	Than sold I cast me to keik in kirk and in markat And all the contré about, kyngis court and uther, Quhair I ane galland mischt get aganis the nixt yeir For to perfirneis furth the werk quhen falyeit the tother — A forkyn fare, ay furthwaert, and forsy in draucht, Nother febill nor fast nor falyeit in labour, Bot als fresche of his forme as flouris in May. For all the fruit sald I fang, thocht be the flout bargeoun. <sup>1</sup>	apply myself to look about handsome sister perform; send up exhausted by shape
85		
90	"I have ane wallisdrag, ane worme, ane auld wobat carle, <sup>2</sup> A waistit wolroun na worth bot woudis to clatter, Ane burnbart, ane dronbee, ane bag full of flewme, Ane scabbit skarth, ane scorpioun, ane scutarde behind." To se him scatt his awin skyn grit scunner I think. Quhen kissis me that carybald, than kyndillis all my sorow.	wound up swine worth nothing an ulcer; phlegm scratch; digest I feel monster
95	As birs of ane brym hair his herd is als stif, Bot soft and souppill as the silk is his sary lame. He may weill to the syn assent, bot sakles is his deidis. With gor his tua grym ese ac gladderit all about. And gorgeit lyk tua gataris that war with glar stoppit.	bristles; fierce hair sorry instrument harmless churn; eyes clogged; guitars; slime
100	Bot quhen that glowerand gaist grappis me about, Than think I hiddoun Mahowne hes me in arms. Thair ma na sanyne me save fra that auld Sathane, For thocht I croce me all cleine fra the croon doon, He wil my corse all beclip and clasp to his breist.	glowering incubus (i.e., Lucifer) There may no sign cross myself entirely body embrace and hold
105	Quhen schaiffyn is that ald schaik with a scharp rasour, He schowis on me his schevill mouth and schendis my lippis, <sup>3</sup> And with his hard burcheone scyn sa hekkis be my chekis That as a glemand gleyd glowis my chaftis. I schrenk for the scharp stound bot schout dar I sought	shaves; fellow reddening skin; scratches burning coal; jaws cower; sharp pain
110	For schore of that auld schrew, schame him betide.	fear

<sup>1</sup> A vigorous ferrener, always up front, and forceful in plowing

<sup>2</sup> For all the fruit that I should seize, though he [made] the flower bloom

<sup>3</sup> I have faw husbandf a useless slob, a worm, an old hairy caterpillar

<sup>4</sup> A scabby cormorant, a scorpion, a befoaled behind

<sup>5</sup> He shoves on me his shovel-mouth and befools my lips

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	The luf blenkitis of that bogill fra his blerde ese	<i>love-looks; goblin; bleary eyes</i>
	As Belzebub had on me blent, abasit my spreit.	<i>As [if]: looked, depressed</i>
	And quhen the smy on me smyrkitis with his snake smolet	<i>wrinkle; rile smile (?)</i>
	He seppillis like a farcy aver that flyrit on a gillot. <sup>1</sup>	
115	Quhen that the sound of his saw sinkis in my eris,	<i>noise sinks into my ears</i>
	Than ay resewi is my soy or he be neir cunand.	<i>annoyance before he comes near</i>
	Quhen I heir nemmyt his name, than mak I nyne crocis	<i>named; nine crosses</i>
	To keip me fra the cummerans of that carll mangit	<i>annoyance; crazy fellow</i>
	That fall of eldnyng is and anger and all evill thewis.	<i>jealousy; babbler</i>
120	I dar nought lake to my luf for that lene gib.	<i>from tom-cut</i>
	He is sa full of jelasy and engyne fals,	<i>evil designs</i>
	Ever ymagynng in mynd materis of evill,	
	Compasand and castand cacsis a thousand	<i>Imagining and devising situations</i>
	How he sall tak me with a trawe at trist of ancothit.	<i>trick (?)</i>
125	I dar nought keik to the knap that the cop fitis	<i>glance or the lad; cap</i>
	For eldnyng of that ald schew that ever on evill thynkis,	<i>jealousy</i>
	For he is waistit and worne fra Vemas werkis	
	And may nought beit worght a beset in bed of my mystirs.	
	He trowis that young folk I yerne yeild, for he gane in. <sup>2</sup>	
130	Bot I may yake all this yer or his yerd help.	<i>ale; year before his rod helps</i>
	Ay quhen that caribald carll wald clym on rey wumbe,	<i>monster; climb</i>
	Than am I dangerus and daine and dour of my will.	<i>randaffish; haughty</i>
	Yit leit I nevir that larbar my leggis ga betraene	<i>impudent fool</i>
	To fyle my flesche na famesyll me without a fee gret;	<i>defile; fumble</i>
135	And thought his pen party me payis in bed,	<i>though his penis poorly</i>
	His purse pays richely in recompense after.	
	Fot or he clym on my corse, that caribald forlane,	<i>before; axelless beast</i>
	I have condition of a curche of kersp all ther fynest,	<i>require a kerchief of sheer fabric</i>
	A gown of engranyt claight right gaily furrit,	<i>gown of scarlet-dyed cloth; fur-trimmed</i>
140	A ring with a ryall stane or other riche jowell,	
	Or rest of his rousy raid, thought he wer rede wod.	<i>clumsy attack; furious with anger</i>
	For all the baddis of John Blant, quhen he abone clymis,	<i>bitter; climbs on top</i>
	Me think the baid deir about, sa bawch ar his werkis. <sup>3</sup>	

<sup>1</sup> He extends his lip like a sick old nag leering at a filly

<sup>2</sup> Lines 128–29: And may not satisfy my needs in bed worth a beam. / He thinks I yearn eagerly for young folk, since he is senile

<sup>3</sup> I think the delay dearly bought, so feeble are his works

Poem 84: The Tretis of the Twa Mariit Women and the Wedo

- 145 And thus I sell him solace thought I it sour think.  
Fra sic a sye God yow saif, my sweet sisteris deir?" such a man
- Quisen that the semely had said his sentence to end,  
Than all thai leach upon loft with latis full mery  
And raucht the cop round about full of riche wynis,  
And ralyceit lang or thai wald rest with ryatus specche.
- 150 The wedo to the tothir wlonk warpt this wordis:  
"Now, fair sister, fallis yow but fonying to tell,  
Sen man feest with matrimony yow menskit in kirk,  
How haif ye farne — be your faith, confess us the treuth! —
- 155 That band to blise or to ban, quhilk yow best thinkis;  
Or how ye like lif to led into lell sposage?  
And synے myself ye exem on the sarmyn wise,  
And I sall say furth the suth, dissymyland no word."
- The plesand said, "I protest, the treuth gif I schaw,  
That of your youngis ye be traist." The tothir twa grantit.  
With that sprang up his spreit be a span hechar.  
"To speik," quod scho, "I sall nougnt spar, ther is no spy neir,
- 160 I sall a regiment reveil fra rute of my hert,  
A rousc that is sa rankild quhill risis my stomok.  
Now sall the byle all out brist that beild has so lang.  
For it to beir on my breist wes bordin our hevy.
- 165 I sall the venome devoidid with a vent large  
And me assuage of the swalme that suelit wes gret.
- "My husband wes a hur master, the hugeast in erd.  
Therfor I hait him with my hert, sa help me our Lord.  
He is a young man ryght yaip, bot nougnt in youth flouris,  
For he is fadit full far and feblit of streng.
- 170 He wes as flurising fresche within this few yeris,  
Bot he is falyeid full far and falyeid in labour.  
He has bene lychour so long quhill lost is his natar,  
His lame is waxit larbar and lyis into swounde.
- 175 Wes never sageorne wer set na on that snailly tyrit,  
For after sevin oulks rest it will nougnt rap anys.  
He has bene waistit upon wemen or he me wif chesit,
- lovely [lady]  
laughed loudly; behavior  
passed  
jesting, before
- lady spoke these words  
it falls [if] you without deceit  
Since; honored  
have you fared  
bond; pain  
to lead in loyal marriage  
then myself you may examine  
truth, faking
- lovely [lady]; if I reveal  
trustworthy  
spirit; higher  
fist; root  
rancor so bitter; swelling  
burst; built up  
burden too great  
pour forth; discharge  
swelling
- whoremaster; on earth  
hate  
active  
enfeebled; exhausted  
lecher; until  
sexual instrument; useless  
rest; tired slug  
works; tap once  
before; [for] wife chose

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	And in adultré in my tyme I haif him tanc off.	caught often
180	And yit he is als brankand with bonet on syde, And bleskand to the brichtest that in the burght daelis, Aise curly of his clothing and kemyng of his baris As he that is mare valyand in Venus chalmer.	prancing glancing covertly; combing more valiant
	He semis to be sumthng worth, that syphyr in boar,	cipher in the bedroom
185	He lakis as he wald luffit be, thought he be litill of valour. He dois as dotit dog that damys on all busis And liffis his leg apon loft thought he nought list pische. He has a bake without lust and lif without curage.	foolish; prey; bushes need to piss sexual desire
	He has a forme without force and fessoun but vertu, <sup>1</sup>	
190	And fair wordis but effect, all fruster of dedis. He is for ladyis in huf a right lasty schadow, Bot into derne at the deid he sal be drup fundin. He ralis and makes repet with ryatys wordis,	worthless of deadish shadow (i.e., fake)
	Ay rasing him of his radis and rageing in chalmer.	in the dark; dead; droopy be found
195	Bot God wait quhat I think quhen he so thra spekis And how it settis him so syde to sege of sic materis. <sup>2</sup> Bot gif himself of sun evin myght ase say amang thaim: Bot he nought ase is bot name of naturis possessoris.	jokes; noise; trivial Ever boasting; prowess knows; boldly
	Scho that has ase auld man sought all is begylit —	some evening
200	He is at Venus werkis na war na he serrys. I wend I jousit a gem and I haif geit gottin; He had the glemyng of gold and wes bot glase fundis. Thought men be ferse, wele I fynd, fra falye ther curage,	is not entirely deceived no worse than he appears thought I enjoyed; yet found to be glass
	Thar is bot eldayng and anger ther hertis within.	fierce; afterwards fails jealousy
205	Ye speik of berdis on bewch — of blise may thai sing, That on Sanct Valentynis day ar vacandis ilk yer. Hed I that plesand previlege to parti quhen me likit, To change and ay to cheise agane, than chastitè adew!	birds on fal; bough are free fra mate each year
	Than said I haif a fresch feir to fang in myn armys;	mate to embrace
210	To hold a freke qahill he faynt may foli be calit. Apene sic materis I mus at mydryght fall oft And marris so in my mynd I mardris myselfin. Than ly I walkand for wa and walteris about,	man; is weak muse miser walking for woe; loss

<sup>1</sup> He has a body without strength and appearance without energy

<sup>2</sup> And how it suits him so widely in boast of such matters

Poem 54: The Tretis of the Twa Mariit Women and the Wedo

	Wariand off my wikit kyn that me away cast,	Cursing; my wicked kin
215	To sic a cradeune but curage that knyt my cler bewti, <sup>1</sup> And ther so moray kene keyghtis this kenrik within. Than think I on a semelyat, the suth for to tell, Na is our syre be sic sevir; with that I syth oft, Thus he ful tenderly dois turne to me his name person,	bold; realm handsomer [one] Than; by seven times flaccid (empty) pliant rod; bold
220	And with a yoldin yend dois yolk me in armys And sais, 'My soverane succit thing, quylt sleip ye no betir? Me think ther haldis yow a here, as ye sum harme alyt.' Quod I, 'My horry, hold abak and handill me nought sair. A bache is happenxit hastely at my herf rat.'	fever; suffered
225	With that I seme for to swoane thought I na swerf tak, And thus beswikk I that swane with my succit wordis. I cast on him a crabitt e quhen cleir day is cummyn. And lettis it is a luf blenk quhen he about glerrys. I turne it in a tender luke that I in tene want.	An ache; heart's root do not faint deceitful; that man crabby look let on; love look; glances
230	And him behaldis hanely with hertly smyng.  "I wald a tender peronall that myght na put thole, That hatit men with hard geir for hurting of flesch, Had my god man to hir gest, for I dar God swer, Scho said not stert for his straik a stray breid of erd. <sup>2</sup> 235 And synce I wald that ilk band that ye so blist call Had band him so to that bryght quhill his bak werkit; And I wer in a beid broght with berme that me likit, I trow that bid of my blis said a boord want."	young girl; not wish to suffer instruments good man (i.e., lover); swear  young lady till his back ached bed; [af] man girl; would not be amused
240	Onone quhen this amryable had endit his speche, Loud lauchand the laif allowit his mekle. <sup>3</sup> This gay wiffis maid gam amang the grene leiffis, Thai drukk and did away dale under derne bewis, Thai swapit of the succit wyne, thai swan quhit of bewis. <sup>4</sup> Bot all the perlyar in plane thai put out ther vocis.	Then when; pleasant [woman]  These sorrow; secret boughs more boldly in complaint

<sup>1</sup> To such a coward without desire who possessed my splendid beauty

<sup>2</sup> She should not flinch at his stroke a straw's breadth of earth

<sup>3</sup> Laughing loudly the others commended her greatly

<sup>4</sup> They quaffed the sweet wine, those swan-white ladies

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- 245 Than said the weido: "Iwis, ther is no way othir,  
Now tydis me for to talk, my taill it is nixt.  
God my spreit now inspir and my speche quykkin,  
And send me sentence to say substantious and noble,  
Sa that my preaching may pers your pverent hertis.  
250 And mak yow mekar to men in mameris and condicounis.
- "I schaw yow, sister, in schrift I wes a schrew ever,  
Bot I wes schene in my schrowd and schew me innocent;  
And thought I dour wes and dane, dispitois and bald,  
I wes dissymblit suttelly in a sanctis liknes.  
255 I semyt sober and sucit and sempill without fraud,  
Bot I couth sexty dissaiif that suttillar wyr haldin.  
Unto my lesson ye lyth and leir at me wit,  
Gif you nougnt list be forleit with losingeris untrewe.<sup>1</sup>  
Be constant in your governance and counterfeit gud maneris,  
260 Thought ye be kene, inconstant, and cruell of mynd.  
Thought ye as tygris be teme, be tretable in huf,  
And be as tutoris in your talk, thought ye haif talis brukill.  
Be dragonis baith and dovis ay in double forme,  
265 And quhen it nedis yow, onone note baith ther stranthis.  
Be amryable with humble face as angellis apperand,  
And with a ternebill tail be stangand as edderis.  
Be of your luke like innocenis, thought ye haif evill myndis.  
Be courty ay in clothing and costly arrayit —  
That hantis yow nougnt worth a hen, yowr husband pays for all.
- 270 "Twa husbandis haif I had, thai held me baith deir.  
Thought I dispytit thair agane, thai spyt it na thing.  
Ane wes a hair boycart that hosit out flewme.  
I hatin him like a hund thought I it hid prevé.  
With kissing and with clapping I gert the carill son;  
275 Weil couth I claw his crake bak and kemm his lewt noddill,  
And with a bulky in my cheik bo on him behind,

<sup>1</sup> If you do not wish to be abandoned to faithless deceivers

Poem 84: *The Tretis of the Twa Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*

	And with a bek gang about and blear his ald e, <sup>1</sup> And with a kynd contynance kys his crynd chekis, In to my mynd makand miskis at that mad fader.	wrinkled cheeks making scornful faces
280	Trovand me with trew lufe to treit him so fair. This caught I do without dale and na disces tak, Bot ay be esery in my mynd and myrthfull of cher.	Trusting could; pain; discomfort disposition
	"I had a lufsummar leid my lust for to slokyn That couth be secrete and sure and ay saif my honour,	more lovable look; stake
285	And sew bot at certane tymes and in sicir placis. Ay quhen the ald did me anger with akwoed wordis. Apon the galland for to goif it gladit me agane.	engage; safe gave suck; ways
	I had sic wit that for wo weipit I litill, Bot leit the sueit ay the sour to gad sesone bring.	
290	Quhen that the chaf wald me chid with girmund chaftis, I wald hem chuk, cheik and chyn, and cheris him somekill That his cheif chymys he had chevist to my sone, Suppos the churll wes gane chaist or the child wes gottin.	boor; snarling jaws chin, cheek and chin chief manor house; bequeathed Although; impotent before crazy fool
295	As wis woman ay I wrought and not as wod fale, For mar with wylis I wan na wichtnes of handis.	more; wou than strength
	"Synne maryt I a merchand myghti of godis. He wes a man of myd ald and of mene statur, Bot we na fallowis wer in frendship or blad, In fredome na furth bering, na faimes of personuse — <sup>2</sup>	They married; good middle age; medium
300	Qwhilk ay the fale did forget for febilnes of knawleige. Bot I sa oft thought him on qahill angrit his hert, And qahilam I pat furth my voce and peddir him callit. I wald ryght twichandly talk be I wes teyse maryt,	reminded him, which sometimes; peddler sharply; because; twice
305	For endit wes my innocence with my ald husband. I wes apperand to be pert within perfit eild: Sa sais the curst of our kirk that knew me full ying. He is our famous to be fals, that fair worthy peolon.	mature age says too respectable

<sup>1</sup> Lines 275–77: *Well could I scratch his crooked back and comb his cropp'd head, / And with puffed out cheeks make a face at him from behind. / And with a look of respect turn about and blear his old eye*

<sup>2</sup> Lines 298–99: *But we were not equals in friendship nor in descent, / Nor generosity nor conduct, nor personal beauty*

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	I sal be laith to lat him le quhill I may lake furth.	tell lies; look around
	I gert the burthman obey — ther wes no bate ellis —	made the shopkeeper; remedy
310	He maid me ryght hie reverens fra he my ryght knew, For, thocht I say it myself, the severance wes mekle Betwix his bastard blude and my birth noble.	after; just deserts difference; great
	That page wes never of sic price for to presone anys' Unto my persone to be peir, had peté nought grantit.	equal
315	Bot mercy into womanheid is a mekle vertu, For never bot in a gentill hert is generit ony ruth.	never except (i.e., always); pity
	I held ay grene into his mynd that I of grace tak him, And that he couth ken himself I curtaisly him lerit.	always fresh recognize; taught
	He darst not sit anys my summondis, for or the secund charge. <sup>1</sup>	
320	He wes ay redy for to ryn, so rad he wes for blame. Bot ay my will wes the war of womanly natar:	run; afraid
	The mair he loutit for my luf, the les of him I rakin, And eik — this is a ferly thing — or I him faith gaif	desire; the worst frowned; cared for
	I had sic favour to that freke and feid syne forever.	also; wondrous; before
325	Quhen I the cure had all cleane and him ourcamdyn baill, I crew above that craudone as ook that wer victour.	man; hated afterward
	Quhen I him saw subjeit and sett at myn bydding,	control; overcome wholly
	Than I him lichtlyit as a lowne and lathir his maneris.	crowed over; coward
	Than woxe I sa unmerciable to martir him I thought,	submissive
330	For as a best I broddit him to all boyis laubour.	despised; rascal; hated
	I wald haif riddin him to Rome with raip in his heid	grew
	Wer not ruffill of my renounce and rumour of pepill. <sup>2</sup>	beast; goaded
	And yit hatrent I hid within my hert all.	rope; head
	Bot qahilis it hepit so huge quhill it behad out.	hated; entirely
335	Yit tak I nevir the wosp cleane out of my wyde throte	But sometimes; until it was forced out
	Quhill I oucht wantit of my will or quhat I wald desir.	plig
	Bot quhen I severit had that syre of substance in erd	While I anything lacked
	And gottin his biggings to my barne and hic burrow landis.	buildings; child
	Than with a slew stert out the stoppell of my hals.	wink jerked; stopper from my throat
340	That he all stanyst throu the stound as of a sticke wappin.	was stunned; shock; weapon
	Than wald I efter lang first sa fane haif bene wrokin.	afterwards; gladly; emerged

<sup>1</sup> That lower-class person was never of such worth as to presume ever

<sup>2</sup> He dared not once disregard my summons, for before a second command

<sup>3</sup> If not for the injury to my reputation and the people's disapproval

Poem 84: *The Tretis of the Twa Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*

	That I to flyte wes als fers as a fell dragon. I had for flattering of that fule feyecit so lang. Mi evidents of heritagis or thai wer all seit.	sould; cruel fool pretended lineage documents; sealed
345	My breist that wes gret beild bowdyn wes sa huge That neir my baret out birst or the hand makin. Bot quhen my billis and my bauchles wes all braid seit, <sup>1</sup> I wald na langar beir on bridle bot braid up my heid. That myght na mislet mak me moy na hald my mouth in.	war so greatly swollen endure; raised bridle bot; neck
350	I gert the ronyeis rak and rif into sondir, I maid that wif carli to werk all womenis werkis And laid all manly materis and mensk in this eird. Than said I to my cummaris in counsall about, 'Se how I cabeld yone cost with a kene brydill.	made the veins rip and tear effeminate fellow to perform flj conducted; dignity, earth gossips tied; colt
355	The cappill that the crelis kest in the caf mydding Sa curtaisly the cart drawis and kennis na plangeing. He is neught skeich na yit sker na scippis nought on syd. <sup>2</sup> And thus the scorne and the scaith scapit he nothir.	horse; basket; east; dungheaf spirited; skimp; skips humiliation escaped
360	"He wes no glaidsum gest for a gay lady, Thaerfor I gat him a gam that ganyt him betir. He wes a gret goldit man and of gadis riche. I leit him be my lumbarb to lous me all misteris, And he wes fane for to fang fra me that fair office	cheerful lover made him a game; raised <i>i.e.</i> , wealthy banker; free me of need happy to take
365	And thought my favoris to fynd throw his feill giftis. He grathit me in a gay silk and gudly arrayis, In gownis of engranyt clait and gret goldin chenyeyis, In ringis ryally set with riche ruby stonis, Quhill bely raise my renouse among the rude peple.	receive; many gifts dressed dyed cloth; chains
370	Bot I full craftely did keip thai courtly wedis. Quhill after dede of that drupe that docht nought in chalmir. <sup>2</sup> Thought he of all my clothis maid cost and expense. Aneothir sall the worship haif that weildis me effit. And thought I likit him bot litill, yit for luf of othris	Which greatly ruined <i>those</i> fancy dresses possesses
	I wald me prunya plesantly in precius wedis	green myself

<sup>1</sup> Lines 346-47: *That my anger nearly erupted before the contract was established. / But when my legal documents and formal reproaches were all fully sealed*

<sup>2</sup> Until after the death of that drooper who was awlless in bed

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- 375 That luffaris myght upon me luke and yng hasty gallardis  
 That I held more in daynté and derer be fulmekill  
 Ne him that dessit me so disk — full dehit wes his heyd!  
 Quhen he wes beryit out of hand to hie up my honoris,  
 And paynit me as pakon, proudest of fedderis,  
 380 I him miskeneyt, be Crist, and cukkald hire maid.  
 I him forleit as a lad and latlyit him mekle —  
 I thought myself a papringay and him a phakit herle.  
 All thus enforset he his fa and fortifyit in strenth  
 And maid a stalwart staff to strik himselfe dounse.
- delight; desire by far  
 Then; finely  
 plundered; raise  
 peacock; feathers  
 ignored; cuckold  
 abandoned; despised  
 parrot; plucked heron  
 Thus strengthened; sue  
 sturdy
- 385 "Bot of aunc bownd into bed I sall yow breif yit:  
 Quhen he ase hal year wes hastyt and him behafflit rage,<sup>1</sup>  
 And I wes laith to be loppin with sic a lob avoir,<sup>2</sup> mounted by such a clumsy old horse  
 Abe lang as he wes on loft I likit on him never  
 Na leit never enter in my thought that he my thing persit;
- aroused  
 "king" penetrated
- 390 Bot ay in mynd anothir man ymagynit that I haid,  
 Or ellis had I never mery bene at that mynthal raid.  
 Quhen I that grome geldit had of gadis and of natur,  
 Me thought him gracelose on to goif, sa me God help.  
 Quhen he had warit all on me his welth and his substance,
- rule  
 curtailed fellow  
 ugly to look at  
 spent
- 395 Me thought his wit wes all west away with the laif.  
 And so I did him dispise; I spittit quhen I saw  
 That superspendit evill spreit spyleit of all vertu.  
 For weill ye wait, wiffis, that he that wantis riches  
 And valyeandnes in Venus play is ful vile haldin.
- used up; deprived  
 wives; lacks  
 reliance; held
- 400 Full fruster is his fresch array and fairnes of persone.  
 All is bot frutlesse his effair and falyeis at the upwith.  
 I buskit up my barnis like baronis sonnies  
 And maid bot fulis of the fry of his first wif.  
 I banyst frs my boundis his brethir ikane,
- worthless  
 implement; failure at climax  
 dressed my children  
 foot; spawn  
 banished; lands; brethren each one
- 405 His frendis as my fais I heid at feid evir.  
 Be this ye beleif may, I luffit nought himself,  
 For never I likit a leid that langit till his blade.  
 And yit thir wismen, thai wait that all wiffis evill  
 Ar kend with ther conditionis and knawin with the samin. Are known by these actions
- foes; feud  
 By  
 person who belonged  
 these wisemen; knew

<sup>1</sup> When he a whole year was curbed and needed sexual passion

Poem 84: *The Tretis of the Twa Marit Wemen and the Wedo*

410	"Deid is now that dyvour and dollin in erd, With him deit all my dale and my drye thoughtis. Now done is my dolly nyght, my day is upsprangin. Adew, dolour, adew, my daynt now begynis. Now am I a wedow, iwise, and weill am at ese.	deitor; buried in earth died; sorrow mournful pleasure certainly
415	I weip as I wer weiful, bot wel is me for ever. I busk as I wer baifull, bot blith is my hert. My mouth it makis murnyng and my mynd lauchis. My clokis thai ar caerfull in colour of sabil, Bot courtly and ryght curyus my corse is ther under.	weep as [f]l dress as if I were in mourning laugh mournful beautiful; body droop; sad; mournful
420	I drup with a ded lake in my dale habit, As with manis daill I had done for dayis of my lif! <sup>1</sup>	(i.e., widow's clothing) <i>I flake my mood</i>
425	"Quhen that I go to the kirk cled in eair weid, As fFoxe in a lambis fleise ferrye I my cheir. Than lay I flught my bright buke on braid on my kno With mony lusty letter ellumerynit with gold, And drawis my clok forthwart our my face quhit	forth; book open illuminated ever; white
430	That I may spy unaspitt a space me beside. Full ofte I bleesk by my buke and blynis of devotion To se quhat berne is best beaud or bredest in schalderis Or forgeit is maist forcely to farryste a banca! <sup>2</sup>	glance from; cease
435	In Venus chalmer valycandly withoutin vane ruse. And as the new mone all pale oppresxit with change Kythis quhilis bet cleir face throw cluddis of sable, So keik I throw my clokis and castis kynd lakis	main boast moon Shows awhile; through peep; looks
440	To knychtis and to cleirkis and cortly personis, Quhen frendis of my husbandis behaldis me on fer, I haif a watter sponge for wa within my wyde clokis, Than wring I it full wylely and wetis my chekis. With that watteris myn ere and welteris downe teris, Than say thai all that sittis about, 'Se ye nought, allace, Yone hustlese led, so lelely scho luffit her husband. Yone is a petid to espeint in a princis hert,	behald me from afar sponge for nose cleverly eyes; flows <i>joyless person; loyally</i> sorrow

<sup>1</sup> As if with man's sexual dealings I were done for the rest of my life

<sup>2</sup> Lines 429-30: To see what man is best browned or broadest in shoulders / Or forged is most strongly to provide a [sexual] banquet

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	That sic a perle of plesance vald yone pane dre. <sup>1</sup>	<i>pearl of delight; experience such pain</i>
	I sane me as I war aye sanct and semys aye angell,	<i>I cross myself; saint</i>
445	At langage of lechery I leit as I war crablit.	<i>lechery I pretend to be angry</i>
	I sit without sair hert or seiknes in body,	<i>sigh</i>
	According to my sable weid I mon haif sad maneris,	<i>I must have</i>
	Or thai will se all the sauh — for certis we wemen,	<i>certainly</i>
	We set us all for the syght to stile men of treush. <sup>2</sup>	
450	We dule for na evill deid, sa it be derne haldin.	<i>suffer; deed; bold secret</i>
	—Wise wemen has wayis and wonderfull gydingis	<i>ways [of acting/stratagems; fool</i>
	With gret engyne to bejaip ther jolyus husbandis,	<i>achieve our ends</i>
	And quyvetly with sic craft conwoys our materis	
	That under Crist no creatur kensis of our doingis.	<i>under Christ (i.e., on earth); knows</i>
455	Bot folk a cury may misike that knowlege waris	<i>disk; mis-lead</i>
	And has na colouris for to cover ther awne kindly fautis,	<i>devices; faults</i>
	As dois thir damysellis for derne dotit lufe	<i>secret foolish love</i>
	That dogonis haldis in dainte and delis with thaim so lang	<i>worthless men</i>
	Quhill al the contré knew ther kyndnes and faith.	
460	Faith has a fair name bot falsheid fairs beitir —	
	Fy on her that can nougat feyne her fame for to saif!	<i>pretend; good name</i>
	Yit am I wise in sic werk and wes all try tyme.	
	Thoght I want wit in waeldynes I wylis haif in huf,	<i>wiles have</i>
	As ony happy woman has that is of hie blade.	<i>high blood</i>
465	Hutit be the halek lase a hunder yeir of eild!	<i>Shamed by the foolish lass</i>
	I have ase secrete servand, rycht sobir of his young.	
	That me supportis of sic nedis quhen I a syne mak.	<i>such; sign make</i>
	Thoght he be sympill to the sicht, he has a tong sickie,	<i>sight; reliable</i>
	Full mony semelyas sege wer service dois mak.	<i>man worse</i>
470	Thoght I haif cas under cloke the cleir day quhill nyght,	<i>until</i>
	Yit haif I solace under serk quhill the sone ryse —	<i>charm</i>
	Yit am I haldin a haly wif our all the haill schyre.	
	I am sa peteour to the pur quhen ther person is mony. <sup>3</sup>	
	In passing of pilgrymage I pride me full mekle —	
475	Mair for the presse of peple na ony pardon wyning.	<i>praise; than [for] any</i>

<sup>1</sup> We present ourselves in such a way as to deceive men of the truth

<sup>2</sup> I am so pitous to the poor when there are many people

Poem 84: *The Tretis of the Twa Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*

- "Bot yit me think the best board quhen baconis and knychtis  
 And oþir bacheloris blith, bluming in youth,  
 And all my laffaris lele my luging persewys.  
 And fyllis me wyne wantonly with weifair and joy.  
 Sam rownis and sum ralycis and sum redis ballatis,  
 Sam ralffis furght ruddly with riatus speche,  
 Sam plenis and sum prayis, sum prasis mi bewte,  
 Sam kissis me, sum clappis me, sum kyndnes me proferis,  
 Sam kerffis to me curtaþi, sum me the cop giffis,  
 Sam stalwardly steppis ben with a stout curage  
 And a stiþ standard thing staiffis in mi neiff,  
 And moþy blenkis ben our that but full fer sittis,<sup>1</sup>  
 That maþ for the thik thrang nouȝt thrif as thaþ wald.  
 Bot with my fair calling I comfort thaum all:  
 For he that sittis me next, I nip on his finger;  
 I serf him on the noþir syde on the samyn fasson;  
 And he that behind me sittis I hard on him lene;  
 And him befor, with my fat fast on his I straenþ;  
 And to the bernis far, but sucit blenkis I cast.  
 To every man in speciaill speke I sum wordis,  
 So wiþy and so womanly qahill warmys ther hertis.  
 Thar is no liffand leid so law of degré.  
 That soll me luf unluffit, I am so loik herit.  
 And gif his lust so be lest into my lyre quhit  
 That he be lost or with me lak, his lif soll not danger.  
 I am so mercifull in mynd and menys all wichtis,  
 My sely saull sal be saif quhen Sabot all jugis.  
 Ladyis, leir thir lessoneis and be no lassis fundin.  
 This is the legeand of my lif, thought Latyne it be nane."  
 Quhen endit had hit ornat speche this eloquent wedow,  
 Lowd thaþ lewch all the laif and leoffit hit mekle,  
 And said thaþ suld exampill tak of her soverane teching  
 And wirk after hit wordis, that woman wes so prudest.  
 Then culit thaþ ther mouthis with comfortable drinkis  
 And carpit full cummerbl with cop going round.
- prick  
bluming  
loyal lovers my home frequent  
power; playfully; happiness  
whisper; joke; read poems  
rage wildly; riotous  
complain; praise  
embrace; affection  
carves [choice pieces]; cup offers  
inside  
thrust; fist  
not succeed  
warm welcome  
same fashion  
lean  
foot hard; stamp  
men far off, only  
which  
living had so low  
warm-hearted  
if desire; given; white skin  
(if he does not have me  
take pity on all men  
innocent soul; (i.e., God); judges  
girls proud  
Latin  
laughed; others; loved  
cooled  
spoke quite intimately; cup

<sup>1</sup> And many glance inside who sit far on the outside

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- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
|     | Thus draif thai our that deir nyght with danceis full noble<br>Quhill that the day did up daw and dew donkit flouris.   | passed<br>Until; downed; bathed   |
|     | The morow myld wes and meik the mavis did sing,<br>And all remafflit the myst and the meid smellit.   | mild; blackbird<br>gone wat; meadow fwan/ fragrance                     |
| 515 | Silver schouris doune schuke as the schene cristall,<br>And bendis shewit in schaw with ther schill setis.<br>The goldin glitterand gleme so gladit ther hertis,<br>Thai maid a glorias gle amang the grene bewis.    | bright crystal<br>bright song; wood<br>music; bought<br>murmuring; sole |
|     | The soft sowch of the swyr and sounse of the stromys,   |   |
| 520 | The sweet savour of the sward and singing of foulis<br>Myght confort ony creature of the kyn of Adams<br>And kindill agane his curage thought it wer cald slokryt.<br>Thus raiis thir ryall roses in ther eiche wedis | flowers<br>quenched<br><i>these royal roses; garments</i>               |
|     | And rakit hame to ther rest throw the rise blanzys.   | went home; blooming bushes  |
| 525 | And I all perevelly past to a plesand arber,<br>And with my pen did report ther pastance most mery.   | privately; garden<br>pastime  |
|     | Ye auditoris most honorable that eris has gevin<br>Unto this uncouth aventure quhilke airly me happinnit,<br>Of thir thre wanton wiffis that I haif writhin heir.   | <i>our has given</i><br><i>strange; which early</i>                     |
| 530 | Quhilke wald ye waill to your wif gif ye suld wed one?  | <i>choose for; if</i>   |

## *Explanatory Notes*

### **Abbreviations**

Ar	Arundel MS	Mc	Mackenzie, <i>Poems of William Dunbar</i> (1932; rev. 1960)
As	Asloan MS	MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
B	Bannatyne MS	MEL	<i>Middle English Lyrics</i> , ed. Luria and Hoffman
BD	Bannatyne Deaf MS	MF	>Mainland Folio MS
Bw	Bawcutt, <i>Poems of William Dunbar</i> (1998), 2 vols.	OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
CM	Chapman and Myllar Print	PF	<i>Parliament of Fowls</i>
CT	Canterbury Tales	R	Reidpath MS
DOST	<i>Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue</i> .	RP	The so-called Rouen Print
HF	<i>House of Fame</i>	RR	<i>Roman de la Rose</i>
IMEV	Brown and Robbins, <i>Index of Middle English Verse</i>	SGGK	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i>
K	Kinsley, <i>William Dunbar: Poems</i> (1957)	TA	<i>Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland</i>
LGW	<i>Legend of Good Women</i>	TC	<i>Troilus and Criseyde</i>

### **1. On the Nativity of Christ [Et nobis puer natus est]**

Dunbar's hymn on the birth of Christ is often considered one of the finest expressions of sheer joy in English literature. In what is sometimes referred to as the *Jubilate omnia* theme, the voices of all Creation blend together in celebration of this most special occasion, Christ's Nativity. The Latin phrase with which the poem begins, and the second Latin phrase that provides the refrain for each stanza, both derive from messianic passages in Isaia; they were incorporated in the liturgy for Advent services and were also used for the Feast of the Annunciation. The image of the dew dropping from Heaven was commonly associated in the Middle Ages with the Incarnation and is frequently found in hymns in the Adoration of the Virgin tradition. (Compare the "dew in Aprille" [line 15] of the Marian lyric "I syng of a Maiden" — MEL, p. 170.) While the poem focuses primarily on Christ's Nativity, it also contains many traditional images and symbols that occur in literary and visual depictions of

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the Annunciation and the Incarnation. Seven 8-line stanzas rhyming *ababbcbC*, the refrain in Latin. Found in B only. Mc79, K1, Bw58.

- 1-2 Verse 2 is the English paraphrase of the Latin in verse 1, which comes from Isaia 45:8, the Introit for the fourth Sunday in Advent.
- 3-7 Here the birth of Christ is treated as if a new sun has arisen, a daystar so bright that no clouds can hide it and not even the old sun, Phoebus Apollo, can rival it. (Compare Apocalypse 22:16 where Jesus is called "the bright and morning star.") This new sun, which has come down from His heavenly tower, is born of the Virgin Mary, the flower of flowers and the rose of Paradise. Compare "A Ballad of Our Lady" (Poem 4), line 26, where the phrase "day steeme" is used to describe Mary.
- 8 *Et nobis puer natus est.* The Latin phrase from Isaia 9:6 commonly appears as a refrain in nativity carols as well as the Christmas Mass Introit.
- 9-10 There are nine groups of angels comprising the heavenly hierarchy, and five of them are mentioned here: archangels, angels, dominations, thrones, and powers (the four not mentioned are seraphim, cherubim, virtues, and principalities). The *martyris saec* ("martyrs many," line 10) probably refers to the 144,000 of Apocalypse 14 who have merit a place for themselves in Heaven prior to the general Last Judgment.
- 9-16 Beginning with the denizens of Heaven, the movement in this stanza is downward from the angels and martyred saints, to the operations of the cosmos — the stars, planets, spheres, and the heavenly vault — and then to the realms of Nature existing beneath the moon and composed of the elements fire, earth, air, water. These verses probably suggest that the birth of Christ has brought about a great cosmic harmony, and as a result, all of creation rejoices.
- 12 *fornament.* The heavenly vault generally, though possibly the eighth sphere of the fixed stars.
- 17-24 In this stanza the focus shifts to sinful man, whose redemption is made possible by Christ's birth, death, and resurrection. Lines 19-20 reveal that because sinners were not able to come to Christ, Christ has humbly volunteered to come to them.
- 25-32 Now the poet turns more specifically to members of the clergy, who are urged to fulfill their responsibilities and to honor this occasion with reverence and ceremony.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 2*

- 28      *of kingis King*. From *Apocalypse* 19:16. Compare "In Praise of Women" (Poem 5), line 29.
- 33–56     The final three stanzas return to the *Jubilate omnia* theme introduced earlier, as the birds, the flowers, and then all of creation unite in singing *Gloria in excelsis*.
- 38–39     In "On the Resurrection of Christ" (Poem 3), lines 21–23, Christ is also depicted as the glorious dawn or daybreak that dispells the darkness of night. This image also recalls *Isaiah* 9:2 ("the people that walk in darkness shall see a bright light"), a verse read by Christian exegesis as an allusion to the Harrowing of Hell.
- 43–44     The image of Jesus as the blessed fruit of Mary would have been familiar from the angelic salutation of the *Annunciation* (Luke 1:28, 42): *Ave Maria, gratia plena; dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus* ("Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus").
- 47      *Prince*. Compare *Isaiah* 9:6 ("the prince of peace").
- 49–51     The regions of the universe treated in stanzas 2 and 3 — the heavens, the area of the cosmos between Heaven and earth, and the earthly realm itself — are again shown to be three distinctive places that unite in celebrating the Lord's coming.
- 49      *hevin imperial*. The highest heaven of all and God's dwelling place. Compare Douglas, *The Polir of Honoure*, line 1878, and Lindsay, *Dreme*, lines 383 and 514–18.
- 51      *fische . . . fawill*. A common juxtaposition indicative of scope. Compare the thirteenth-century song "Fowles in the frith / þe fisses in þe fawill" — *MEL*, p. 7.
- 53      *Gloria in excelsis*. "Glory in the highest"; these are the initial words of the *Gloria* in the Mass, reflecting the angels' words to the shepherds in Luke 2:14.

**2. Of the Passion of Christ**

One of Dunbar's several dream-vision poems, "Of the Passion of Christ" is a Good Friday meditation that offers a vivid account of the events surrounding Christ's Passion. In addition to depicting the terrible agony experienced by Christ both before and during the Crucifixion,

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the poem also reminds sinful man of the spiritual preparations he must make in preparing a resting place for Christ in his heart. After the initial stanza, in which the narrator falls asleep in the oratory of a friary, the next eleven stanzas (lines 9–96) focus on the horrific events themselves; among the grisly details depicted are several that are absent from the gospel accounts but that are often seen in the visual arts and in literary works such as the mystery plays. The next sub-section comprises five stanzas depicting the narrator's emotional responses, which are reflected in a series of personified figures (representing the narrator's own internal feelings) who vigorously accost him and ultimately purify him, making him a fit receptacle for God's grace. In the final stanza the narrator awakens and immediately records his visionary experience. Hasler comments on the meditative patterns that foreground the cultural construction of subjectivity as the poem establishes connections between language and desire: "The subject observing the Passion becomes a series of metamorphoses of allegorical spaces; the engaged witness is transformed into a stage for a psychomachia, to emerge finally as a house fit for Christ to enter" (p. 197). Eighteen 8-line stanzas rhyming *ababbebe* in MF; As contains only twelve stanzas. Mc80, K3, Bw1.

- 3-4     *And kneit down with ane Pater Noster / Befoir the michtie King of Glorie.* I.e., he kneels down and recites the Lord's Prayer before an image of Christ, for the phrase *King of Glory*, see Psalm 24:7–10 in the Vulgate. Compare "The Table of Confession" (Poem 7), lines 1–3.

- 7     *gaude flore.* He sings the popular Latin hymn *Gaudete flore virginis*, which concerns the seven heavenly joys of the Virgin. In my gloss I have followed the ME poet's translation of "Gaudet virgo, Mater Christi": "Glade us, maiden, moder milde." See *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, ed. Karen Sasse (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998), Poem 87, line 1 (p. 162).

- 16     *O mankynd, for the laif of thev.* This line, which becomes the refrain for this 11-stanza sub-group, recalls line 49 in Lydgate's *Crister Passiouer*: "Al this was doon, O man, for love of the!" (p. 218).

- 19     *rage.* According to *DOST*, the word primarily means "to tug," esp. violently, and is often used in conjunction with the feeding habits of beasts that *rage* (i.e., "rend") their food, a meaning utilized in lines 60 and 106. A secondary, nominal meaning of the word is "roaring," for which *DOST* lists only this line as a source. It is likely that Dunbar has both meanings in mind here, an implication that further emphasizes the terrible violence perpetrated on Christ.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 2*

- 26     *For scorste that cled Him into quhyt.* That Jesus was gaebed in white as a mark of scorn reflects the Latin phrase *veste alba* in the Vulgate text of Luke 23:11.
- 29     *Dispuousalle syn did Him smyt.* Luke 22:64.
- 38     *worldis dñe.* Three is a number indicative of a totality, thus "all worlds"; see Vincent Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), pp. 4-5, and Aristotle's *De Caelo* 1.1. Augustine, in *De Libro Arbitrio* 2.11.126, implies a formulation whereby the three worlds of air, land, and sea are equivalent to the "everywhere" that would perish were it not for God's numbering of Creation.
- 54     *His face, the fude of angelis fre.* The reference recalls line 28, which had mentioned the delight angels took in looking upon His eyes; in both cases the references emphasize the vileness of what is taking place. The phrase may ultimately derive from the Latin phrase *panis angelorum* ("the bread of angels") in Psalm 77:25 in the Vulgate. Compare *JMEY* 1715, where Jesus is called "the faire aungels fode" (line 33) and "sungels brede" (line 44).
- 59-62     *The clayth that claiſt to His cleir byd . . . That it was pietie for to se.* This gruesome detail is not found in the canonical scriptures but does occur in other literary accounts, including the cycle plays (see Rosemary Woolf's discussion, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968], pp. 226-27).
- 71     *be houris six.* Possibly "for six hours," though more likely "at the sixth hour" (John 19:14).
- 74-76     *Qwhil all His vancys brist and brak . . . They leit Him fall down with one vnak.* Christ's tormentors allow the Cross to fall to intensify His suffering; this is a traditional feature rather than a scriptural one.
- 81     *Bewis no rheiffis the spreit He goſſ.* Luke 23:46.
- 83-85     *The erde did trimmell . . . The day seow dirk at oþy nicht.* Luke 23:45.
- 86     *Deid bodies raiſ in the cité.* Matthew 27:52-53.
- 89-92     *weir that He wes yir on byf . . . blide and watter did furth glyde.* John 19:34.

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- 97-136 In this 5-stanza sub-group (which introduces a new refrain line), the vision shifts from focusing on the events of the Passion to focusing on the narrator's emotional response to them. The device of having a series of allegorical personifications interact directly with the narrator is one that Dunbar uses in many poems. The afflictions visited upon him by Compassion, Contrition, Ruth, Remembrance, Pain, and Pity show how genuine and how painful is his response to Christ's suffering. Unlike the others, Grace treats him kindly and urges him to prepare a final resting place for Christ.
- 104 *Thy blisstir Salvatour Jess.* The new refrain reflects the dreamer's acceptance of Jesus as his "blessed Savior," one of the most important of the traditional names for Jesus.
- 106 *ruggig.* The verbal echo of lines 19 and 60 deftly recalls both the buffeting and scourging of Christ, a literal example of the act of Remembrance and thereby of the experience of the dreamer.
- 109 *passione.* Once again, Dunbar utilizes a verbal echo, this time of line 5, to provide a concrete example of the experience of the dreamer. The dream is situated by reflection upon the Passion, and it is the pain of that Passion — graphically revealed in the dream vision itself — that causes the dreamer such pain and moves him, at last, to Pity and Grace.
- 115-19 The final resting place that Grace urges the narrator to prepare for Christ is not a tomb or sepulcher but rather a home — presumably a spiritual home within the heart or body of the true Christian (compare 2 Corinthians 5:1). This metaphor is continued in the next two stanzas.
- 117 *dayis thre.* The three days between the dreamer's witnessing of the Passion and the Christ's return into his soul parallels the three days between Christ's death on Good Friday and His resurrection on Easter Sunday (Luke 24:7). It is also likely meant to recall the three worlds ransomed by Christ's Passion (line 38).
- 119 *in thy boar sail herbeit he.* For the body as the soul's dwelling place, see 2 Corinthians 5:1. This medieval commonplace provides the allegorical framework for works such as *King Hart*.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 3*

- 121–28 Here Contrition, Confession, Conscience, and Repentance cleanse the dwelling and open its gates so that Penance can enter, all in anticipation of the Savior's arrival. In the following stanza Grace becomes the dwelling's caretaker.
- 123 *Conscience me accusit heir.* Conscience plays a vital role at the Last Judgment; see 2 Corinthians 1:12 and *King Hart*, line 572.
- 131–132 Being spiritually prepared for the Lord's arrival is the message of such parables as "The Good Steward" in Matthew 24 and "The Wise and Foolish Virgins" in Matthew 25.
- 138–39 The earthquake which awakes the narrator recalls the shaking of the earth at the moment of Christ's death in the gospel accounts (e.g., Matthew 27:51, compare line 83); here, of course, it also provides the device by which the narrator's visionary experience is brought to an end.
- 140 *With spreit hafflingis or effray.* The line may reflect the state of emotional turmoil in which the narrator awakens, while also suggesting that the spirit creatures who have appeared to him are fleeing in all directions. Compare line 187 of "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30).

### *3. On the Resurrection of Christ [Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro]*

The third of Dunbar's hymn-like poems depicts Christ's great triumph over Satan and his minions in the Harrowing of Hell and celebrates His Resurrection on Easter Sunday morning. Here the poet creates a striking collage of traditional images and ideas associated with the time immediately following the Crucifixion. Virtually every commentator on the poem has been in awe of the compelling rhythmic power of Dunbar's verses; C. S. Lewis called it "speech of unanswerable and thundering greatness" (1954, p. 96). Contributing to the thundering effect of the verses is Dunbar's frequent use of alliteration and especially the end-stopped quality of every line in the poem. It seems quite possible that the poem was composed for choral singing, though we have no evidence that that actually occurred. The Latin refrain is a versicle for the Mass for Easter Sunday.

The poem contains a total of forty lines, arranged in five 8-line stanzas, and it is possible that the numbers 5, 8, and 40, numbers rich in biblical associations and symbolism, were selected to enhance the themes of the Resurrection. In regard to structure, the first and last stanzas of the poem summarize the overall events; the second stanza focuses on images of Satan and his malice; the third focuses on images of Christ and His victory over Satan; and the fourth stanza

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emphasizes the glorious consequences of Christ's Resurrection. See Pamela K. Shaffer, pp. 54–60, for a detailed analysis of the poem's symmetrical architecture. The rhyme scheme — ababbcbC — is that of Dunbar's other hymns. B only. M81, K4, Bw10.

- 1      dragon blak. The dragon symbolizes Satan several times in *Apocalypse*, particularly in the War in Heaven. See *Apocalypse* 12:7–9, 12:17, and 20:2.
- 2      Our campisoun Clyrst. The heroic actions of Christ following His death on the Cross provide the subject for numerous literary works throughout the Middle Ages. The English mystery play cycles include a Harrowing of Hell play, and there are vivid descriptive accounts in poems such as the Middle English debate poem *Death and Life*. The principal source for all of these materials is the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus. The scriptural basis for the Harrowing of Hell is very slight, occurring only in 1 Peter 3:18–20 and 4:6.
- 3      The gentis of Hell ar brokis with a crak. The breaking open of the gates of Hell is a common element in the Harrowing of Hell; it occurs in Nicodemus 18, and may derive ultimately from Psalm 23:7 in the Vulgate.
- 4      The signe triumphall rausit is of the Croce. Depictions of Christ — both visual and literary — carrying the Cross as a battle standard were medieval commonplace.
- 6      The sunfir ar borrowit and to the bli car go. The redeemed souls that now can go to bliss are those of the Old Testament patriarchs, who were condemned to Hell as a consequence of Adam's sin. Compare the Middle English lyric "Adam lay i-bounden" (MEL, p. 147).
- 7      endoce. Literally, "endorse"; the metaphor is a financial one in which Christ has repaid Man's ransom by endorsing the promissory note with His own blood.
- 8      Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro. Compare Luke 24:34.
- 9      the deadly dragoon Lucifer. Satan is not depicted as a serpent in Genesis 3 alone, but also in *Apocalypse* 12:9, where he is called "the ancient serpent . . . the deceiver of the whole world." For the name Lucifer ("light-bearer"), compare Isaia 14:12.
- 11–15     The tiger, like the dragon and the serpent, was also a common symbol of the devil in the Middle Ages. This cruel beast who lies in wait for his prey will be thwarted by the lion, the resurrected Christ of line 19.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 3*

- 18      *lyk a lamb in sacrifice.* Christ is depicted as a lamb in many passages of Scripture; e.g., *Isaiah 53:7*, *Acts 8:32*, *1 Peter 1:19*, and throughout *Apocalypse*.
- 19      *lyk a lyone rissin ap agane.* In *Apocalypse 5:5* Christ is called the Lion of Judah; and commonly in medieval bestiary literature the lion was a symbol of Resurrection — this was because a lion cub was said to be brought to life on the third day after its birth when its father licked it into shape and breathed into its face.
- 20      *at a gyane raxit Him on hicht.* Probably an allusion to the exultant giant in *Psalm 18:6* in the Vulgate; but the story of Samson carrying off the gates of Gaza (*Judges 16:3*) may also be pertinent. In any case, it is a powerful and arresting image. See *Biblio Panoplia*, plate 1 (p. 43), which juxtaposes Samson carrying the gates with the Resurrection.
- 21–23     Christ is the bringer of radiant light — He is the dawn, the sun, and the day that vanquishes the night. Compare "On the Nativity of Christ" (Poem 1), lines 36–40.
- 27–28     The allusion in these verses is to the darkness that occurs during the Crucifixion (*Luke 23:44–45*).
- 29      *The knell of mercy.* This refers to the ringing of the church bells on Easter Sunday morning, emblematic of the triumph of the Resurrection. Compare *Piers Plowman*, B.18.428.
- 33–39     This final descriptive summary returns us to the initial stanza of the poem. Here the rhythm of each line is intensified by the yoking of pairs of related items: "The foe is chased, the battle is done / The prison broken, the jailers fled," etc.
- 35      *weir.* "War" is the obvious gloss, though there may also be connotations of *weir* n. 2: "uncertainty, doubt, and confusion"; and *weir* n. 3: "a bog, or slough, swamp," which are common metaphors of Hell (n.b., Bunyan's "slough of despond" from *Pilgrim's Progress*).
- 39      This verse takes us back to the first verse of the poem, telling us once more that the terrible black dragon that had guarded his hoard for so long has been vanquished and his treasure taken away. Thus the poem concludes with an image of Christ as a heroic dragon-slayer.

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4. *A Ballad of Our Lady [Ave Maria, gracia plena]*

Dunbar's poem in praise of the Virgin is highly traditional and yet also quite unusual. It draws heavily upon the great store of traditional images associated with the Virgin in numerous Adoration of the Virgin poems, images that are derived not only from the scriptures but also from the liturgy, biblical commentaries, sermons, and Latin hymns. Most of these images are familiar to students of medieval literature — e.g., Mary as the bright heavenly star, Mary as the rose of Paradise, Mary as the fleur-de-lis, Mary as both mother and maiden, Mary as intercessor for sinful man. Others are probably less familiar — Mary as a shield and as a strong warrior, Mary as an unseen anchor, and Mary having been fed with angel food.

At the same time, Dunbar's penchant for experimentation and innovation is greatly evident in this poem. For example, in each of the 12-line stanzas the Latin refrain occurs not in the final verse but in the ninth verse; and in each of these stanzas, aside from the Latin refrain, the end rhyme is achieved with just two rhyming sounds. Even more remarkable is the fact that in each a-verse in the rhyme scheme internal rhyme occurs in triplets, while in each b-verse there is alliteration. Asperate diction also occurs throughout the poem, and Dunbar often seems to be inventing words or adapting them directly from Latin phraseology — e.g., "regyne" (line 6) from *regina*, "rosyne" (line 8) from *rosa*. The end result of this profusion of devices is a jewel-like creation, though one, it is probably safe to say, that does not suit the taste of every modern reader. The poem survives only in As. Seven 12-line stanzas rhyming ababababChab, Mc82, K2, Bw16.

- 1 *Hale.* Echoes of the angelic salutation to Mary, recorded in Luke 1:28 and 42, reverberate throughout the poem both in English and in the Latin *Ave maria, gracia plena!* of the refrain.
- 1-12 The dominant image in the first stanza is of Mary as a heavenly beacon who dispenses the darkness and serves as our guide. Very often in poems on the Virgin she is called the *stella maris*, "the star of the sea," though that particular image does not occur in Dunbar's poem. Dunbar returns to the image of Mary as a heavenly star in lines 25-28.
- 5 *Hodiern, modern, sempitern.* "For this day, for this age, for all eternity"; compare Hebrews 13:8.
- 6 *Angelical regyne.* The Virgin was often thought of as the queen of Heaven and the queen of angels; students of ME literature will be familiar with this idea from the anonymous ME poem *Pearl*. Compare Kennedy's *Passion of Crist*, line 123.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 4*

- 8-10      The association of flowers with the Virgin — especially roses and lilies — probably derives from the imagery of the Canticle of Canticles 2:1-2.
- 9      *Ave Maria, gracie plena.* See Luke 1:28.
- 11      *virgin matrem.* The phrase reflects the Virgin's paradoxical status as both maiden and mother.
- 14      *Alphair habitable.* The reference is to the physical Incarnation of Christ in Mary; she has become His "dwelling." For *Alphair*, compare "I am the Alpha and the Omega" — Apocalypse 1:8 and 22:13.
- 16      *Hir tabernakle.* This is a common image for the Virgin's womb; compare Kennedy's *Passions*, line 28: "The Haly Gaist schane in his tabernakil."
- 22      *but makele.* "Without blemish," i.e., immaculate; in the ME lyric "I sing of a maiden" (MEL, p. 170) the Virgin is similarly said to be "makeles" (line 2).
- 26      *day sterne.* A phrase more often applied to Christ than to Mary, as in "On the Nativity of Christ" (Poem 1), line 23.
- 29-30      *puttar to flight / Offendis in horole.* This striking image of Mary as strong in fight is fairly unusual in adoration poems; nevertheless, the Virgin is sometimes so portrayed in Miracle of the Virgin narratives and in various works in the visual arts.
- 31      *plidre.* Although Mary is not called the *stella maris* in this poem, her frequent association with maritime metaphors is reflected in her image as an anchor, a traditional symbol of hope for medieval Christians.
- 34      *gentill ey/ningale.* The nightingale, though often associated with amorous love in medieval literature, could also be associated with Christian love. Lydgate refers to Mary as a nightingale in *Ballade of Reverence of Our Lady* (line 80, p. 258); and in Dunbar's own "The Merle and the Nightingale" (Poem 66), the nightingale speaks in favor of loving God.
- 39      *scheue unseyne with carnale eyne.* This image of Mary as a beauteous one who is unseen by human eyes, which contrasts strongly with the many references to her as a radiant heavenly beacon, accords with the image of Mary as an unseen anchor in line 31.

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- 40      *rox of Paradys*. The rose of Paradise is also the *rosa sine spina*, the "rose without a thorn," a phrase commonly applied to the Virgin in poems of adoration. In medieval tradition, prior to the Fall the rose was unfading and thornless.
- 42      *fleur delycor*. The fleur-de-lis, a variety of lily, often used to symbolize Mary's royalty and her sexual purity, a tradition arising from biblical commentaries on Canticle of Canticles 2:2.
- 43      *grene dasyne*. "Green daisy" — "green" perhaps in the sense of "fresh." The daisy, a variety of sunflower, was a common symbol of truth and fidelity in the Middle Ages, and in its whiteness and perfect circularity was associated the pearl. The Latin word *margarita* may be used to refer to either the daisy or the pearl.
- 47-48     Mary as intercessor or mediator is one of her most familiar and important roles. *Oratrice* (line 48) means "orator" or "speaker" and is just one of the several terms Dunbar creates by applying the feminizing suffix -ice.
- 51      *Our glore forlore for to restore*. Mary, as the second Eve, restores our lost glory by undoing Eve's deed, which results in a greater good than would have otherwise been; this is perhaps an oblique allusion to the paradox of the Fortunate Fall.
- 56      *To mak our oddis evyne*. The phrase apparently refers to Mary's help in "evening up the odds" for sinners at the time of the Last Judgment when their souls are being weighed in the balance. There may also be a hint in this stanza that Mary will help to "even the odds" by producing a fortunate roll of the dice, suggested by the references to seven and eleven in lines 50 and 58.
- 59      *Qwhill store and bore my youth devore*. "While pain and age devours my youth" — the only personal reference in the entire poem.
- 65      *Our wyt pareys fro encrys*. In regard to Mary as our "shield," it is interesting to note that Sir Gawain has the image of the Virgin painted on the inside of his shield in *SGGK* (lines 648-50).
- 73      *Imperiall wall*. Kinsley interprets *wall* to mean "well" (or fountain), and Mary as a "well" or "wellspring" is certainly a common image in Marian poetry. But the central figure that runs through lines 73-78 is of Mary as a magnificent habitation suitable for enclosing Christ. Thus *wall* may actually refer to the "outer wall" or

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 5*

"rampart" which surrounds the palace, the hall, the hospice, and the private chamber ("closet" [line 78]) — all of which are itemized in the ensuing verses.

- 74      *peirles paleritad*. Compare Douglas, *The Polit of Honour*, line 1414.
- 79      *Bright hall cristal*. Crystal was often used as a symbol of the Virgin's purity, though the image of the Virgin as a crystal hall was not so common. Here, though, it creates a compelling sense not only of her purity but also of her physical perfection, making her the perfect house in which to enclose the Lord.
- 80      *angell fude*. Compare "Of the Passion of Christ" (Poem 2), line 54 and note.
- 82-84     The final verses of the poem emphasize the crucial importance of the Virgin in the ransoming of fallen man by Christ on the Cross.

### *S. In Praise of Women*

Because this poem in praise of women contrasts so strongly with the negative attitude toward women reflected in many of Dunbar's poems, some commentators have wondered whether "Now of women" should be assigned to him at all, or whether his praise of women might actually be ironic. While neither of those suggestions can be entirely discounted, they seem unlikely. Indeed, just as the previous poem is a genuine celebration of the Virgin Mary in particular, this poem appears to be a genuine celebration of women generally; and the two poems are directly connected by the fact that the Virgin is here presented as the supreme example of womanhood.

While "In Praise of Women" is a celebration of all women, what it especially praises is mothers and motherhood and the most glorious mother of all, the Virgin mother. (If Mother's Day had been celebrated in the sixteenth century, one could imagine this poem as having been written for that occasion.) Beginning with verse 14, the emphasis in what follows is on the pain and suffering that mothers experience for the sake of their children — in conception and pregnancy, in giving birth, and in nursing and child-rearing. And as the poet points out in his final verses, although Christ did not have a human father, He had a human mother who bore Him in perfect holiness. For that reason, he suggests, women should be honored above all things. A ME poem containing many of the same sentiments is the Vernon MS poem "Of Women cometh this Worldes Weal" (JMEV 1596; see *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century*, ed. Brown, pp. 174-77). This is Dunbar's only poem in iambic pentameter couplets. B and MF. Mc45, K72, Bw40.

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- 4-6 Here the speaker denounces men who disparage women — which was certainly a common medieval phenomenon — by saying that a man who dishonors women only dishonors himself. Lines 22-26 repeat this sentiment in even stronger terms.
- 7-8 *See that of women cummin all ar we; / Women ar women and sa will end and de.* It is not entirely clear how these lines relate to each other, or what is intended by line 8. But what seems to be stressed is the commonality of men and women — women give birth to all people, men and women alike, and women are merely flesh and blood and thus subject to death, just as are men. Bawcutt believes there may be a visual play on words in *wemot*, with its possible suggestion of *we men* (Bw 2.373).
- 13 *comalf with pane.* This phrase probably refers to the pain of childbirth rather than conception, though it is also possible that it refers to the physical discomforts experienced by women during pregnancy.
- 22-24 "Whoever says anything against them, he fouls his own nest and should be exiled from good company." Although the unnatural act of fouling one's own nest is proverbial (Whiting B306), these lines directly recall issues raised in the ME bird debates the *Owl and the Nightingale* and the *Thrush and the Nightingale*. In the *O&N* the nightingale accuses the owl of being such a bird. The *T&N* concludes with the thrush, who has been disparaging women, being bested by the nightingale — whose trump card is Virgin Mary. The final result is that the thrush is exiled from the land.
- 27-30 The final argument in support of women stems from the fact that Christ had a human mother but no human father. At this point one might expect the poem to pursue the Adoration of the Virgin theme, but it does not. This has led some commentators to suspect that the poem has been abridged in order to satisfy post-Reformation religious sentiments.
- 29 *King of Kingis.* Compare "On the Nativity of Christ" (Poem 1), line 28; and Apocalypse 19:16.

**6. *The Manner of Going to Confession***

"The Manner of Going to Confession" is one of Dunbar's several religious poems that focus on the Lenten season. Its particular concern is with the Christian's spiritual preparation for confession, and it is therefore one of the only poems we have in which we see the poet

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 6*

fulfilling one of his clerical responsibilities. The tone of the poem is sober and fatherly, gently admonishing its hearers to be mindful of the sins they must reveal to their priest. The forty days of Lent, the period from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday, was a time for penitence and reflection on one's spiritual condition, all in anticipation of receiving the Holy Eucharist at mass on Easter Sunday. One curious side note in the poem is the speaker's admonition (in lines 29–35) to select one's confessor with care, comments that imply a criticism of some of his fellow clergymen. The main emphasis in the poem, though, is on the importance of searching one's conscience thoroughly, uncovering every sin, and then fully reporting those sins in confession. Ten 7-line rhyme royal stanzas rhyming ababbcc. At only. Mc84, K5, Bw41.

- 1     *forty dayis*. The forty days of Lent, from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. Compare Henryson's *Fables*, lines 320 and 2120. Forty is used to signify a period of trial in the Bible: it measures the time Moses spent on the mountain (Exodus 24:18), Elijah traveled before his vision in the cave (3 Kings 19:8), Ninevah was given to repent (Jonas 3:4), the spies were in the land (Numbers 13:26), and, of course, the time Jesus spent in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2, Mark 1:13, Luke 4:2).
- 2     *wilfull*. "Willing," i.e., voluntary; a valid confession must be freely offered and not compelled.
- 3–6    The reference is to Jesus' forty-day fast in the wilderness. See Matthew 4:1–2.
- 8–14   The first requirement in preparation for confession, as these verses suggest, is a truly penitent heart.
- 13     *That every syn be theseſe be schawis*. This verse seems to indicate that each sin must be separately revealed.
- 15–28   This pair of stanzas develops an analogy between physical ailments and spiritual ailments. A person can be neither physically whole nor spiritually whole unless all ailments have been addressed. The confessor is a person's spiritual physician.  
*Now saddle it tell with all the circumstance*. The full circumstances surrounding a particular sin should also be recounted.
- 29     *discreit*. "Discerning"; the confessor must be able to distinguish, for example, between the lesser sins (venial sins) and greater sins (mortal sins). Compare "The Table of Confession" (Poem 7), line 91.

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- 29-36 The speaker here urges his listeners to choose their confessors wisely. If they do not, it becomes a case of the blind leading the blind.
- 35 *ane blynde man is lef furth be ane other.* "The blind leading the blind" is a popular medieval proverb (Whiting B350), originating in Matthew 15:14. Pieter Bruegel the Elder has a striking painting illustrating this proverb (*The Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind*, 1568). Compare *Piers Plowman*, B.12.180-86, and "Als I lay in a winteris ryf" (JMEF 351), lines 375-76.
- 48 *contriccion.* On contrition as the first step toward penance, followed by confession of mouth, see Chaucer's Parson's Tale (CT X[1]106-315).
- 50-56 Here, finally, the sinner is advised to confess with his "own mouth" all of his sins, which he knows far better than anyone else.
- 54 *These knawis best quhair bindis thoo thi scho.* Proverbial (Whiting S266).
- 57-63 Medieval Christians were required to go to confession at least once a year, a ruling that was established at the Lateran Council of 1215. The advice offered here is that they take stock of their spiritual situations far more frequently.
- 60 *And on the end hes no remembrance.* I.e., "And on the end [of life] gives no thought."
- 64-70 The advice offered in this final stanza is that we should be mindful of our moral conditions while we are still young, for there is great danger in putting it off until old age has come upon us. Compare Ecclesiastes 12:1.

7. *The Table of Confession*

This comprehensive enumeration of the sins probably served as a guide to confession for members of the laity, but it may also reflect the poet's own heartfelt contrition. Like the previous poem, it seems to give us a glimpse of Dunbar in his role as professional cleric; and also like the previous poem, it was probably written expressly for the Lenten season. Unlike "The Manner of Going to Confession," however, in which the speaking voice is admonitory and directed at the sinner, here the voice is that of the sinner himself.

The poem reads like a primer in medieval Christian doctrine, with stanzas devoted to the five senses, the seven deadly sins, the seven deeds of corporal mercy, the seven deeds of spiritual

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 7*

mercy, the seven sacraments, the ten commandments, the twelve articles of faith, the seven virtues, and so on. But, as Barrell observes, the poem "is more than a dry tabulation of sins, and is suffused with emotion, particularly in the refrain and the final prayers" (Bw 2.485). "The Table of Confession" survives in four MS texts, three of which have been altered, probably to make them more palatable to Protestantism; the text here printed is from BL MS Arundel 285, a pre-Reformation devotional book once belonging to the Howard family. Twenty-one 8-line stanzas rhyming ababbcbC. Ms83, K6, Bw83.

- 1-8 This introductory stanza depicts the state of mind the humble and genuinely penitent sinner should be in as he approaches confession.
- 3 *Befor Thy bludy figour dolorax.* The speaker is presumably kneeling before an image of the Crucifixion, as in lines 3-5 of "Of the Passion of Christ" (Poem 2).
- 6 *in word, in work, and in entent.* I.e., "In word, deed, and thought," a phrase from the General Confession.
- 8 *I cry Thee mercy and lase to repente.* I.e., "I beg of you mercy and a chance to repent"; compare Henryson's *Fables*, lines 775-76, and *The Wallace* 9.275-76.
- 9 *I me schrifte.* The dative of agency construction, with the recipient of the action as subject, heightens the idea that shrift is an act performed on oneself.
- 11 *my wittis five.* The five wits, which are the five physical senses, are often mentioned in manuals on confession. The failure to control them leads to sins of the flesh. In *SGGK* they are one of the five fives symbolized by the pentangle on Sir Gawain's shield; Gawain is said to be faultless in his control of them (line 640), which the story largely bears out.
- 17-24 Here the speaker expresses his regret for exercising (*Exercing*, line 21) the seven deadly sins. The sins are listed in lines 19-20, beginning with pride, envy, wrath, and covetousness — the sins of the spirit. Then come lust, gluttony, and sloth — the sins of the flesh (although sloth may also be a spiritual sin). Compare their depiction in lines 13-102 of "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins" (Poem 77).
- 23 *Thy woundis five.* The five wounds of Christ (two in the hands, two in the feet, and one in the side) became a commonplace in medieval devotional literature. They are also one of the fives represented by the pentangle on Gawain's shield (*SGGK*, lines 642-43).

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- 25–32 The seven deeds of corporal mercy derive from Matthew 25:35–36: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink . . .”
- 33–40 The seven deeds of spiritual mercy are correcting the sinner (line 35), teaching the ignorant (line 34), counseling the doubter (line 35), comforting the sorrowful (line 36), bearing wrongs with patience (line 38), forgiving others their offenses (line 39), and praying for the souls of the living and the dead (line 37).
- 43 *hie Eucarist most of excellence.* The first — and “most of excellence” — of the seven sacraments is Holy Communion; the serving of the Eucharist on Easter Sunday is the culminating act of the entire Lenten season. The other sacraments are Baptism, Penance, Confirmation, Holy Matrimony, Ordination, and Extreme Unction.
- 49–56 The ten commandments are presented twice in the Old Testament, in Exodus 20:1–17 and in Deuteronomy 5:6–21.
- 57–72 The twelve articles of faith listed in this stanza are familiar to many Christians as the Apostles’ Creed.
- 73–80 The seven virtues consist of the three theological virtues — hope, faith, and charity — and the four cardinal virtues — fortitude, prudence, temperance, and justice. For the Christian virtues compare 1 Corinthians 13:13 and Galatians 5:5–6.
- 76 *Agyns viciis sure aramyng me.* “Against the sins arming myself securely”; compare Ephesians 6:13–17.
- 81–88 The seven commands of the Church enumerated in this stanza are tithing, avoiding cursing, observing fast days, hearing mass, attending the parish church, making one’s confession, and receiving communion once a year at Easter.
- 89–96 This stanza surveys the sins against the Holy Spirit, which St. Mark warns against in Mark 3:28–30. Compare Chaucer’s Parson’s Tale (CT X[1]692–95).
- 90 *sye agayns nature.* Presumably, this refers to “unnatural” sex acts; compare Romans 1:26–27.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 7*

- 91      *of confessor nullicreit*. As he did in line 29 of the previous poem and in line 85 of this poem, Dunbar again emphasizes the importance of selecting one's confessor wisely.
- 92      *reisait synfull of my Salvior*. I.e., receiving the Eucharist while still in a state of sinfulness.
- 94      The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit originate in Isaías 11:2-3.
- 95      *Pater Noster*, The Lord's Prayer, from Matthew 6:9-13, which includes a series of seven clauses called the seven petitions.
- 105-44    These stanzas offer a lengthy catalogue of more particular offenses — especially sins of word, thought, and deed — in contrast to the more standard violations of Christian doctrine previously described.
- 105-12    This stanza focuses on varieties of the sin of evil speaking.
- 113-20    This stanza focuses on varieties of the sin of evil thinking.
- 121-28    This stanza depicts varieties of sinful deeds, especially improper actions concerning money and property.
- 129-36    Here the focus shifts to the speaker's sins involving duplicity, hypocrisy, and deceit.
- 134      *Counall*. The King's Council, his chief group of advisers.
- Session. The Court of Sessions, the supreme civil court of Scotland, a parliamentary court that sat at various times in various places after 1425. See *DOST* *Session*(s)/*sessions*, n. In "Tidings from the Session" (Poem 74), Dunbar affiliates the Session with Edinburgh. See also "Dunbar at Oxford" (Poem 28), line 37, and "To the Merchants of Edinburgh" (Poem 75), line 57.
- 140      *culpabil know / me*. In contrast to the previous stanzas, the speaker now acknowledges sins he knows he is capable of committing — sins that lodge in his heart — even though he has not actually committed them.
- 145-52    In this stanza the speaker likens himself to Mary Magdalene, whose sins Christ forgave. The model for the penitent sinner, she became the object of a popular cult

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in the Middle Ages. She was one of the witnesses to the Crucifixion and was among the first to see the risen Christ on Easter morning; she was also traditionally identified with the unnamed woman who washed Christ's feet with her tears in Luke 7:37-50. In Luke 8:2, Jesus cast seven demons out of her, traditionally seen as the seven deadly sins. See the Digby play of *Mary Magdalene* for a late medieval confluence of Magdalene traditions on penance and redemption.

- 153-60 Here the speaker, though physically unharmed, expresses his desire to share with Christ the full experience of His Passion on the Cross. Compare "Of the Passion of Christ" (Poem 2), lines 97-112.
- 163-64 Using a judicial metaphor, the speaker expresses his desire for his case to be heard, not in the Lord's court of extreme justice, but in His court of surpassing mercy; it is Christ's death and resurrection that makes such a request possible.
- 165-66 Although it is a medieval commonplace, the figure of the soul as a ship striving to reach safe harbor is a poignant one. Compare "Of Man's Mortality" (Poem 9), lines 41-44, and "Of the World's Vanity" (Poem 11), line 13.

**8. All Earthly Joy Returns to Pain**

There is no neat dividing line between Dunbar's religious poems and his moral poems, as this poem illustrates, for while it clearly belongs to the poet's series of Lenten poems — it is written specifically for Ash Wednesday — it also shares with his moral poems a fundamental concern with human mortality and earthly mutability. Dunbar has several poems in which the narrator tells us what he has overheard; in this case it is the "words" of a bird's song, a fairly common device in medieval poetry (Chaucer had used it in *The Complaint of Mars*, for example). It seems likely that the poem's forty lines are intended to provide a parallel to the forty days of Lent. The verse form of the poem is the French *kyrielle*, a quatrain rhyming abab; Dunbar was fond of this form, employing it about a dozen times. B and MF (which omits lines 17-20). Mc71, K59, Bn49.

- 4       *All earthly joy returnis to pain*. The sentiment expressed in the refrain is a medieval commonplace. Compare Chaucer's "evere the latter ende of joye is wo" (CT VII[B<sup>1</sup>]3205); compare also Henryson's *Praise of Age*, line 26. Whiting cites several early proverbs that express this same idea (J58-61).

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 8*

- 5–7 These verses reflect passages of Scripture such as Genesis 3:19 and Ecclesiastes 3:20 and 12:17, which provided the basis for the Ash Wednesday liturgy.
- 10 *Dest followis lyfe with gaipand mouth.* Hellmouth is commonly represented in medieval drama by the mouth of the Leviathan. Sometimes it was represented on maps as a place far in the west, opposite Eden, which was said to be in the east.
- 15 *flouris laid in ake trane.* Compare Henryson's *Fables*, line 1856.
- 17–18 January and May were traditional opposites in the Middle Ages; compare Chaucer's Merchant's Tale, and *The Kingis Quair*, line 765.
- 19 *Wex never sic droucht bot axir come rane.* The image of the rain coming after a period of drought might seem more like joy following woe than the other way round, although in a damp, cold northern climate dry spells might be highly valued; in any case, the saying is proverbial (Whiting D417).
- 21–24 Although the literal meaning of these verses is problematic, the general sense seems to be that it is a joyful thing when a person has a true heir who can succeed him after the painful experience of his death. The refrain line here deviates from the refrain used in the other stanzas.
- 29–36 The sentiments expressed in these two stanzas are often found in satiric poems in the tradition of the "complaint against the times."
- 37–40 In several of Dunbar's moral poems there is a slight shift in thought at the very end, as there is here. It is as if he is saying, "Since this is the way things are, let us endeavor to achieve a joy that will never end" — the joy of salvation.

### **9. Of Man's Mortality [Quod tu in cinere reveris]**

This highly conventional poem on the *memento mori* theme also belongs to the poet's series of Lenten poems. Both the opening Latin verse and the Latin refrain are derived from the Ash Wednesday service as reflected in the Sarum Missal. Blending the motif of the fallen heroes (one variety of *ubi sunt*) with the motif depicting what we shall soon become (the *ubi erant* theme), the speaker admonishes his readers or hearers to "speed thee, man, and thee confess," for you shall soon return to ashes. Once again, the central concern in this poem is with

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penitence, contrition, and confession. Six 8-line stanzas rhyming ababbcbC. B and MF (where it is anonymous). Mc74, K61, Bw32.

- 1-2 The Latin opening, as well as the Latin refrain, reflects the words spoken by the priest on Ash Wednesday as he touches a worshiper's forehead with ashes: "Man, remember that you are dust and to dust you will return." Verse 2 contains an English paraphrase of the Latin. These phrases derive from Genesis 3:19 — "dust thou art and unto dust thou shall return." The Latin phrasing of lines 1 and 8 is that of the Sarum Liturgy used in Scotland (Bw 2.360).
- 3 *Lang heir to dweill nathing thow pres.* Bawcutt translates the line: "Strive in no way to remain here long" (Bw 2.360).
- 4-6 Compare Job 14:2, "Who cometh forth like a flower, and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow"; and Job 8:9, "for we are but of yesterday and are ignorant that our days upon earth are but a shadow." Compare also Whiting B511.
- 9-16 The theme of the fallen heroes is often used to illustrate human mortality and impermanence, and this is a fairly standard group of such figures. They are usually selected to show that whatever outstanding qualities people may possess — strength, wisdom, power, or beauty — those things have no value when death arrives, for all people go the way of all flesh.
- 11 *Alexander.* As Bawcutt points out, Alexander the Great "had particular popularity in Scotland (the name was given to three kings)" (Bw 2.360). Like Hector of Troy, he was one of the Nine Worthies.
- 13 *playit thair pairti.* "Fulfilled their roles" on the great stage of life. Compare "The Lament for the Makars" (Poem 14), line 46.
- 17-32 This pair of stanzas reflects the *ali sunt* theme, graphically depicting the physical dissolution that lies ahead for every person.
- 27-28 For Death as a dragon, compare "Elegy for Bernard Stewart, Lord of Aubigny" (Poem 36), lines 17-18, and "To the King" (Poem 41), line 28.
- 29-30 These verses bring to mind the conclusion of Ingmar Bergman's classic film *The Seventh Seal*, when Death comes for the knight and his companions who have taken shelter within the knight's castle.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 10*

- 33–36 Regardless of the extent of a person's worldly goods, only one's good deeds have value after death; this idea, which stems from Apocalypse 14:13, is at the heart of the ME morality play *Everyman*. Compare "A Meditation in Winter" (Poem 15), line 44.
- 37–39 The admonition to go quickly to confession is the basic message of the poem.
- 41–48 The extended metaphor contained in these verses describes the sinner as a tempest-tossed ship that is inevitably driven into Death's harbor; only his Ransomer with His five wounds can save the sinner by providing an anchor and a rudder that will steer the ship to the haven of eternal life. Durbar also uses this figure in line 13 of "Of the World's Vanity" (Poem 11).
- 45 The five wounds are the five wounds of Christ on the Cross; Christ is the Ransomer because He ransomed humankind from sin and death by paying with His own life. Compare "The Table of Confession" (Poem 7), line 23.
- 46 The anchor as a symbol of hope derives from Hebrews 6:19. The rudder (*steiris*) as a symbol of divine guidance is seen in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* (CT III[B']833).

### **10. An Orison**

In this short, simple devotional poem the speaker acknowledges that his sensuality has sometimes lured his soul into sin, but he rejoices in the spark of "light and spirituality" that has awakened his mind and has allowed him to rise up in new awareness. He begs for God's grace and a chance to make amends for his sins, in the hope that he can achieve peace and prosperity in this life and afterward attain the bliss of Heaven. This gentle, heartfelt poem anticipates the poetry of George Herbert in the seventeenth century. Hawcutt suggests that the poem may be an extract from a longer poem, which was a common practice in the sixteenth century (Bw 2.421). R and MF. One 8-line stanza rhyming abababbc. Mc78, K7, Bw60.

- 1 sensuality. I.e., the pursuit and indulgence in physical, sensual pleasures.
- 4 wit. Wit is the intellectual faculty that relates to knowledge and understanding, while *reason* ("reason") often relates more to one's ability to make sound moral decisions. As Hawcutt points out, "in King *Hart* Reason and Wit arrive in each other's company (line 578)" (Bw 2.422).

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- 6-8 Kinsley calls attention to the similarity between these verses and a passage in the Scottish Book of Common Prayer: "May the almighty and merciful Lord grant unto you pardon and remission of all your sins, time for true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit" (K, p. 241n7, 6-8). The request for time to repent and atone for one's sins is also reflected in the refrain line of "The Table of Confession" (Poem 7) in the phrase "laser to repent" ("the time to repent").

**II. Of the World's Vanity [Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas]**

This is one of Dunbar's most conventional poems on the theme of worldly impermanence; as in several others, the voice of the preacher urges its hearers to be spiritually prepared for the journey they will soon take. Although it does not mention confession specifically, that appears to be its implicit message. While "Of the World's Vanity" consists largely of moral commonplaces, the poem is enhanced by its rhetorical flair and its effective use of poetic devices. Three 8-line stanzas rhyming ababbcBC. MF only. Mc75, K60, Bw42.

- 1      *O wrecche, be war.* As Reiss points out (p. 128), this phrase is typical of a small group of Dunbar's poems in which the speaking voice is that of a moralizing preacher speaking to "everyman."
- 2      *many greit estait.* I.e., many people of high rank and great achievement.
- 3      *freymd...fo.* While "friend" and "foe" may be taken literally, it is surely figurative as well — i.e., Christ and Satan.
- 5      *Remeid in tyme and rew nocht all to laist.* This is one of the verses (along with line 12) in which the need for repentance, contrition, and confession are most strongly implied.
- 6      *Provyl thy place.* The "place" that needs to be readied is our heavenly abode, not our earthly habitation. Compare Psalm 83:5 in the Vulgate — "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord."
- 7      *Out of this vail of trubhill and dissair.* The image of this earthly life as a "vale of trouble," a medieval commonplace, derives from Psalm 83:7 in the Vulgate. Compare Henryson's *Thre Deid Pollis*, line 2, and Lindsay's *Monarche*, line 5077.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 12*

- 8 *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.* The well-known refrain is taken from Ecclesiastes 1:2.
- 9 *Walk furth, pilgrimage, quhill show her dayis licht.* Hebrews 11:13–15 provides the scriptural basis for viewing life as a spiritual pilgrimage to God. Dunbar's phrase "Walk furth, pilgrimage" seems to echo line 18 from Chaucer's lyric "Truth": "Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth, beste, out of thy stal!"
- 10 *desert.* I.e., the wasteland of this world.
- 13 *Bend up thy sail and win thy port of grace.* This nautical metaphor is similar to what occurs in "Of Man's Mortality" (Poem 9), lines 41–47. Bawcutt points out that the phrase "port of grace" was used for "New Haven and Burntisland, two small harbours on the Firth of Forth," and may therefore have had "a special piquancy for Scottish readers" (Bw 2.376).
- 17–18 N.b., echoes of instability and change in Chaucer's "Lak of Stedfastness."
- 17–24 Several of the verses in this stanza alliterate, and internal rhyme occurs in line 22. Especially striking is the rhetorical pattern in lines 19–22; here the first and fourth lines consist of a balanced pair of antithetical "now" phrases, while the two verses within them each contain four "now" phrases arranged in contrasting pairs. Compare uses of alliteration and internal rhyme in "An Orison" (Poem 10).

### *12. Of Life*

This short homiletic poem provides a succinct analysis of life as offering a choice between Heaven and Hell: we can choose short torment and receive unending bliss, or we can choose short-lived joy and receive lasting sorrow. What is unstated but clearly implied is the fact that we make this choice by how we live our lives. It is possible that this single rhyme royal stanza (ababcc) is an excerpt from a longer poem, MF and B (where it is anonymous). Mc76, K57, Bw51.

- 1 *Quhat is this lyfe.* This recalls the opening phrase of Arcite's death speech in Chaucer's Knight's Tale: "What is this world? What asketh men to have?" (CT II[A]2777). The notion of life as a *way to deid* ("a road to death") is a medieval commonplace and is also reflected in The Knight's Tale in Egeus' comment that "This world nys bot a thurghfare ful of wo" (CT II[A]2847).

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- 3     *A slyding quakeill.* The image of the sliding wheel is allied to the medieval concept of Dame Fortune and her wheel. It brings to mind instances in which figures such as the Nine Worthies are placed upon Fortune's wheel and then dashed to their destruction when she spins it; e.g., the ME Alliterative *Morte Arthur*, lines 3388–90.
- 5     *A pray to deid, quhorne vane is to repell.* The image of man as death's prey also occurs in line 95 of "The Lament for the Makaris" (Poem 14).

13. *Of the Changes of Life*

One of Dunbar's several poems on the topic of earthly mutability, "Of the Changes of Life" focuses especially on the changes in the weather and the seasons as reflective of the impermanence of life in this world. Life's basic pattern, the poet suggests once again, is the alternation of joy and woe. But here, in contrast to poems such as "All Earthly Joy Returns to Pain" (Poem 8), there is no positive upturn at the end, and no admonition to work to achieve a life of permanence in the life to come. Four 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabbA*. Two texts are preserved in MF, and one in R (copied from the first in MF). Mc66, K58, Bw20.

- 6–15    In both stanzas the poet establishes the contrast between *yesterday* (lines 6 and 11), when the weather was soft and fair and the flowers were springing, and *This day* (lines 9 and 12), when the weather stings like an adder and the flowers are all slain. This may simply imply the natural turning of the seasons with winter following summer, or it may suggest the unexpectedness of life, with winter making an untimely reappearance in spring.
- 8–9    The juxtaposed images of the peacock feather and the adder's sting may reflect (and reverse) a traditional piece of Scottish weather lore: "When March comes in with an adder's head, it goes out with a peacock's tail" (Bw 2.333), which is similar to the American expression, "In like a lion and out like a lamb."
- 14     *wakir.* May mean "awakens" rather than "walks" or "moves."
- 16–19   This pairing of items — summer/winter, comfort/care, midnight/morrow, joy/sorrow — often occurs in mutability poems. The third juxtaposition in line 18 (midnight/morrow), reverses the pattern of something negative following something positive. This may be an intentional variation; or it may simply result from the requirements of the rhyme scheme.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 14*

#### **14. The Lament for the Makars [Timor mortis conturbat me]**

"The Lament for the Makars" is a poignant tribute to the poet's fellow poets as well as a general meditation on human mortality in the *memento mori* tradition. The Latin refrain — *Timor mortis conturbat me* — which originates in the response to the seventh lesson in the Office of the Dead, a service read daily by medieval clerics such as Dunbar — became a familiar phrase in the later Middle Ages. It occurs as the refrain in other poems and was often inscribed on tombs. Structurally, the poem consists of two major sections. The first is the speaker's general meditation on the plight of all mankind, and the second is his more specific meditation on the mortality of the great poets, a fellowship to which he himself belongs. The poem may obliquely reflect the late medieval tradition of the *dans macabre*, the Dance of Death, although that association is never made explicit. Scholars debate whether the somber tone of the poem — and the reference to the speaker being "sick" — implies a late date of composition. But the simple fact that all but one of the poets named in the catalogue of makars are now deceased — poets who in some cases were still alive in the first decade of the sixteenth century — justifies the suggestion that this is a fairly late poem.

Two aspects of the poem especially impress this reader. The first is the way the poem creates a sense of Death closing in on the speaker, coming ever nearer and nearer. It does this by first depicting all the general classes of humanity — rulers, nobles, high churchmen, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, the scholar, the theologian, the physician — and then focusing directly on poets — first on the great English poets and then on the Scottish poets. Finally Death turns his attention to Dunbar's closest contemporaries; now, in fact, he is on the verge of taking the last of them, "good Master Walter Kennedy" (lines 89-90). Death's next victim will be the poet himself. Also impressive is the variety of images and metaphors used to depict Death's taking of the poets. It devours Chaucer and Gower; poisons Master John Clerk and James Afflek like a cruel scorpion; kills Blind Harry and Sandy Traill with a shower of mortal hail; and ensnares Robert Henryson and Sir John Ross with the intimacy of a lover's embrace.

But despite the somberness of the poem overall, it is important to note that this poem, like many of Dunbar's poems on the mutability theme, ends on a positive note, emphasizing that life in this world should be viewed as a preparation for the life to come. The length of the poem, 100 lines, may be intended to create a sense of completion and finality. And while it may well be just a coincidence, it is worth noting that the poem contains twenty-five stanzas, which is also the number of makars listed in the catalogue of poets, with the speaker being the twenty-fifth. Twenty-five 4-line stanzas rhyming *aabb* (the Old French *kyrielle*). B, MF, and RP, Mc7, K62, Bw21.

1-44      The first eleven stanzas, essentially the first half of the poem, offer a fairly traditional treatment of the mutability theme. The opening stanza, in which the

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speaker's own condition is described, provides the point of departure for his meditation on death. Stanzas 2-4 discuss human and worldly mutability in quite general terms, while stanza 5 shifts the focus to more specific groups within society. Stanzas 6 to 11 focus on individuals in highly impressive occupations; despite their great abilities, however, they are completely powerless in the face of Death.

- 2      *gret seilnes*. Most commentators suspect the phrase refers to the poet's actual ill health. Reiss suggests that it should be taken symbolically (pp. 229-30).
- 3      *And feblir with iferwile*. Although the poem touches in earnest upon a wide range of themes pertaining to death, A. A. MacDonald suggests that "if the poem were to be read aloud at the court, it would without doubt lend itself to ironic presentation: 'Dunbar at death's door' could easily be another of the protean poet's poses." He might be "deeply concerned at the fact of human mortality, even at the very moment of employing this subject in a profoundly comic poem." Dunbar's actual death was still nearly a decade away when he wrote the poem, perhaps as "a parody of the cliché-ridden and vapid rhetoric all too common in such complaints of love" ("Alliterative Poetry," pp. 277-78).
- 4      *Timor mortis coherbar me*. From the seventh lesson of the Office of the Dead. See headnote, above.
- 5-11     Nicolaisen juxtaposes the repetitive syntax in lines 5 and 6, with the half lines of line 7 and 11, the stress patterning of line 9, the chopped-up quadrupartite line 10, and the later refrain's classic structural division of the sentence into its ultimate constituents (i.e., *Timor mortis coherbar me*) to exemplify the metrical, syntactic, grammatical, in short the linguistic virtuosity of Dunbar, whose understanding of sentence and line makes him "the Hopkins of his age" (Nicolaisen, "Line and Sentence in Dunbar's Poetry," in Aitken, pp. 61-71, esp. pp. 63-69).
- 6-7     The World, the Flesh, and the Devil are man's three traditional foes. Compare *Ais I lay in a winteris myr* (JMEV 351), lines 377-432, possibly derived from St. Bernard's "De tribus inimicis hominis, carne, mundo, et diabolo"; compare also JMEV 2865.
- 10-11    Dunbar uses similar sets of opposing pairs elsewhere, e.g., in "Of the World's Vanity" (Poem 11), lines 19-22. The phrase about "dancing merrily" in line 11 depicts a fleeting moment of joy in this life and is not an allusion to the Dance of Death.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 14*

- 13 *stoir.* Perhaps Dunbar is using this word in both of its senses, "state" (condition) and "estate" (social position).
- 17–19 Here Death is the Great Leveler, taking all humankind without regard to power, status, or wealth.
- 21–44 The listing of the specific occupations that fall prey to Death recalls the *vado mori* ("I go to death") motif encountered in several ME poems in which individual representatives of estates or occupations testify to their "going to death." Compare, for example, "I wend to deeth, knight stith in stour . . . / . . . I wende to deeth, clerk ful of skile" (*JMEV* 1387: "I Wende to dede a kyng y-was").
- 37–39 Grouped together here are various practitioners and possessors of arcane knowledge, people whose vast learning avails them not at all when Death arrives.
- 41–43 The allusion is to Luke 4:23, "Physician, heal thyself." Compare Whiting L170.
- 45–48 This stanza provides the transition into the second half of the poem, with its focus on the *makaris* or poets.
- 46 *Playis heir ther pageant, syn gois to grauf.* "Perform here their parts in life's pageant, then go to the grave." Compare line 13 in "Of Man's Mortality" (Poem 9). The "life's a stage" metaphor was common long before Shakespeare. Compare Whiting P5.
- 49–52 Here Dunbar celebrates his greatest predecessors among the English poets. Line 50 contains his famous homage to Chaucer, whom he describes as *of makaris flour* — the flower of all poets in the English language (line 50). *The monk of Bury* in line 51 is John Lydgate (1370–1449), a Benedictine monk in the monastery at Bury St. Edmunds and the most prolific English poet of the fifteenth century. *Gower*, line 51, is John Gower (c. 1330–1408), Chaucer's contemporary and the author of *Confessio Amantis*, among other notable works.
- 53–92 Now Dunbar begins his roll call of the deceased Scottish poets. A few of them are well-known as poets, but several of them, to the extent that they can be identified at all, are not known for having been poets, though presumably they were. Nothing is known about some of them. See explanatory notes, below, for details.

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- 53-54 Of the first three Scottish poets mentioned, *Heryot* is completely unknown. Sir Hugh Eglintoun, who died in the 1470s, was the brother-in-law of Robert II; he is not known as a poet unless he is the "Huchoun of the Awle Ryale" for whom Wyntoun provides a list of works. *Wyntoun* is Andrew Wyntoun, the prior of Lockleven and author of a long verse chronicle, *Orygynale Chronikil of Scotland*.
- 55 *this cuntry*. I.e., Scotland, as distinct from England.
- 57 scorpion. The agent of the "sting of Death"; compare 1 Corinthians 15:55.
- 58 *John Clerk* may be the author of the several poems in the B MS attributed to "Clerk," though that is only a supposition. The "John Clerk" mentioned in line 81 of "Master Andro Kennedy's Testament" (Poem 80) is thought to be a different John Clerk. *James Agflok* (or perhaps Auchinleck?) has not been identified.
- 59 *trigidé*. Not a "tragedy" in the narrower sense but rather a sad and moving narrative; compare Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*, line 4, and Chaucer's *TC* V.1786. Compare also the definition of the term offered by Chaucer's Monk (*CT* VIII[B]1973-77).
- 61 *Holland* is Sir Richard Holland, an important fifteenth-century Scottish cleric and author of the allegorical animal fable *Blake of the Howlat*. *Barbour* is John Barbour (d. 1395), author of the life of Sir Robert the Bruce, *The Actes and Life of Robert Bruce*.
- 63 *Schr Mungo Lokert of the Le* has not been positively identified, although the Lockharts of the Lee were a prominent family in Lanarkshire.
- 65-66 *Clerk of Tranest* is the second "Clerk" in the list, but no more is known about him than is known about *John Clerk*. *Tranest* is a small town located between Edinburgh and Haddington. If the please asterisk of *Gawaine* is a title rather than a description, it is the only specific work mentioned in the catalogue. Several MS copies of a ME romance called *The Awntyrs off Arthur* survive in a northern dialect of English and Sir Gawain is the central character. Perhaps also pertinent is the Middle Scots romance *Gologrus and Gwain*, which is written in the same strange form as *Awntyrs*. See Thomas Hahn, ed., *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995).

#### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 14*

- 67 *Schir Gilbert Hay.* The fifteenth-century cleric Sir Gilbert Hay was primarily a translator of prose works but also translated the poem *The Baik of Alexander*. He lived much of his life in France and was Charles VII's chamberlain.
- 69 *Sandy Traill* has not been identified, but *Blind Harry* has long been considered the author of *The Wallace — The Actis and Deidis of Schir William Wallace* — even though his name is not mentioned in the single surviving manuscript of the poem.
- 70 *Slaine with his schour of mortall hail.* Showers of mortal hail were sometimes used as God's instruments of death in the Old Testament, e.g., Exodus 9:23–25 and Joshua 10:11.
- 71 The poem "The Thre Dead Polis," usually attributed to Robert Henryson, is assigned to *Patril Johnston* in B. It is known that Johnston was an actor and a producer of dramatic entertainments, in addition to being a notary and a landowner who received revenues from Crown lands in West Lothian (Bw 2.336).
- 73–75 These verses offer the fullest praise in the catalogue, and *Merser* is the only deceased poet to receive an entire stanza. Several poems in B are ascribed to him, but he is otherwise unknown, although Lindsay includes a "Merset" in a list of poets in *Papyego* (line 19).
- 75 *So ahort, so quyk, of sentence hie.* This verse echoes a line from Chaucer's description of the Clerk of Oxenford, whose speech was "short and quyk and ful of by sentence" (CT II[A]306).
- 77–78 Neither of these *Roulls* have been identified, though one of them may be the author of *The Curyng of Sr Johnne Roull* in B, which Hawcutt describes as "a blackly comic poem" (Bw 2.336).
- 81–82 *Robert Henryson.* Dunbar's famous older contemporary and the author of the *Testament of Cresseid*, the *Fables*, and *Orpheus and Eurydice*. He was often called "the schoolmaster of Dunfermline," an important royal and monastic town; he did not live beyond 1505. See the METS edition of his works, ed. Robert Kindrick and Kristie A. Bixby (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997).
- 83 The identity of *Schir Johne the Ros* remains uncertain, though he is almost certainly the same person mentioned in the opening line of Dunbar's famous *Flyting with*

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Kennedy (Poem 83), and probably a very close friend of Dunbar's. None of his poems survive.

86 *Stobo* is John Reid, a very notable clergyman who had served in the secretary's office under James II, James III, and James IV. He is mentioned in line 331 in the *Flyting* with Kennedy (Poem 83). He died in July of 1505.

*Quintyne Schaw* is the author of one poem in MP; he was still alive in 1504, when there is a record of his receiving a royal pension. He is possibly the same person as the Quinting that Dunbar links with Kennedy in line 2 of the *Flyting* (Poem 83).

89–91 *Walter Kennedy*, Dunbar's opponent in the *Flyting*, is the one poet in his catalogue who has not yet succumbed to death; but Dunbar's great sorrow at Kennedy's imminent demise is poignantly reflected in line 91. Bawcutt points out, however, that he did not actually die until 1518 (Bw 2.337).

93 *brother*. I.e., brother-poets.

94 *let me lif alone*. Although the line could mean "leave my life alone," it is more likely to mean "let me live alone"; this sets up a parallel with line 99, where Dunbar hopes that all may live together after death. The latter reading could also be extended to the idea that a man, perhaps especially a poet, cannot truly live in solitude.

97 *Sen for the ded remeid is none*. Proverbial; compare Whiting D78.

98 *Best is that we for dede dispone*. Preparing for death would involve attending to worldly concerns such as making a will, but perhaps more importantly, attending to spiritual concerns, "so that after our death we may live" (line 99).

**15. A Meditation in Winter**

In contrast to most of Dunbar's general meditations on earthly instability and human mortality, "A Meditation in Winter" focuses on the bitter winter weather that creates for the poet an oppressive sense of melancholy, a spiritual malaise that is akin to the emotional state reflected in several of Dunbar's petitions. Here those feelings are caused by the long nights and the dark, wintry days that prevent him from taking pleasure in songs, poems, or plays (line 5) — which probably includes his inability to take pleasure in the writing of songs, poems, and plays. In

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 15*

his petition poems the remedy the poet needs is some tangible reward, but here it is simply the coming of spring. Commentators agree that this is one of Dunbar's finest poems. Ross calls it "the gem" of Dunbar's moral poems (p. 157), and Ridley calls it a "beautiful meditation" (p. 1010). Ten 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabb*. MF contains both a complete version and an incomplete version; R contains only lines 1-22. Mc10, K69, Bw26.

- 1-10 With these verses compare the well-known Harley lyric "Wynter wakenth al my care" (MeI, pp. 13-14).
2. *subtil*. The heraldic term for "black," but also customarily described the color of clothing worn by mourners.
4. *Nature all carage me denys*. The meaning of the term *carage* differs widely in ME texts, depending on the particular context in which it occurs. Here the meaning may be "Nature denies me any pleasure in songs," or perhaps "Nature deprives me of any desire to compose songs."
6. *ayclic dois lessoun hours*. If one follows ecclesiastical time, whereby the daylight and nighttime hours are 12, in winter the nighttime hours are long; in summer short.
- 11-15 These verses recall the opening lines of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* in which the narrator describes his similar condition.
- 17 The personified figures who address the narrator are similar to the ones found in several of Dunbar's petitions and satires. Despair expresses his frustrated attempts to achieve at court the material rewards he believes he deserves; this is the central topic of Dunbar's petition poems.
- 21-30 Patience and Prudence provide the kind of advice that Lady Philosophy offers Boethius in *The Consolation of Philosophy* — that Fortune does not accord with reason and that earthly rewards are simply false felicities that do not last.
26. *Prudence* is an especially high form of wisdom. Compare Henryson's *Fables*, lines 1757-59, and Chaucer's Tale of Melibee (CT VII[B']1869-72). Prudence as a cardinal virtue equates with discernment and right reason.
- 31-40 The benign-seeming words of welcome of Old Age and Death are terrifying in their understated gentleness, as the following stanza makes clear. The little vision is sometimes thought to imply that the poet has now entered old age (and thus that this

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is one of his later poems). But this *petit rève* of what lies in store holds true for all, whether youth or old.

- 34-35 Making a final reckoning or accounting after death was a common feature in homiletic literature about death and is a central element in the ME morality play *Everyman*. Compare *Romans* 14:12.
- 36 *Deid cantis age his gottis wyd*. For a biblical reference to the gates of Hell, compare Job 38:17.
- 39 *this lystall*. The grave is depicted in numerous works — poems, plays, sermons — as a low, narrow, windowless house.
- 46 *Tir quibone* — "yet when" — introduces "the turn" or the about face that turns this stanza (not unlike that of an Elizabethan sonnet) toward a note of hopefulness, on which the poem ends.
- 48 *schorwris* refers back to the literal "schouris" of line 7, but also metaphorically to the speaker's frame of mind.
- 49 *Cum, hastie Summer, with thi floweris*. This verse recalls the joyous welcome the birds sing to summer near the end of Chaucer's *PF*: "Now welcome, sonor, with thy sonne softe" (line 680). Compare also *The Kingis Quair*, line 235.

**16. None May Assure in this World**

Because it reflects the characteristics of several poetic types — the moral poem, the petition, the complaint against the times, and the courtly satire — "None May Assure in this World" illustrates the difficulty in neatly categorizing many of Dunbar's poems. Clearly, though, the poem reflects the poet's devout religious feelings, and, because it incorporates several Latin verses of liturgical origin in its final stanzas, it also reflects the poet's clerical status. Much of the material in the poem about the unfairness and uncertainty of life is familiar — the difficulty in distinguishing friend from foe, falsehood flourishing while truth goes unrewarded, the poor suffering at the hands of the rich, and so on. Yet there are also moments of remarkable freshness, as in the striking group of interconnected metaphors in lines 46-55. All in all, this is one of Dunbar's most intriguing moral poems. Seventeen 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabbaB*. B, MF, and R. Mc21, K63, Bw54.

*Exploratory Notes to Poem 16*

- 1–50 This initial section of the poem, with its catalogue of social ills, is essentially a complaint against the present time. The emphasis in these stanzas is on the lack of fairness that prevails in the world. In the second section of the poem, which is introduced in line 51 with the word "yet," the focus shifts away from present evils to a consideration of future events — especially death and judgment — and these stanzas are filled with apocalyptic images and overtones.
- 6–9 These verses suggest the feelings of an aggrieved petitioner. Whether *Lord* in line 6 refers to his earthly lord or his heavenly Lord is somewhat ambiguous. There is no ambiguity, however, about which lord is addressed in line 81.
- 18 *And name bot just men tholis injare.* Ironically, it is the just who are treated unjustly.
- 23–24 Similar sentiments about the undeserving being rewarded with important secular and religious offices are reflected in Dunbar's petition poems.
- 26–30 In this stanza the speaker suggests that noble qualities are no longer found in members of the nobility. In line 28 *fredeesse*, the noble virtue of generosity, has been replaced by an insistence upon *forfaltour*, forfeiture, which indicates legal proceedings (probably involving confiscation of land) against those unable to pay.
- 36–40 Court flatterers are listened to and rewarded while truth-speakers are excluded. Compare Isaías 59:14.
- 44 *fro the handis goit few gud deidis.* Compare "Of Man's Mortality" (Poem 9), line 35.
- 46–49 These lines present conventional images in an unconventional fashion. The "white whale bone" of line 46 — a reference to the ivory tusk of the narwhal — is often used to describe the loveliness of a lady's complexion, and "azure hue" (line 48) commonly describes a lady's eyes. Here "flint stone" and "adamant" (lines 47, 49) convey a sense of hardness, coldness, and unfeelingness. "Azare" in line 48 refers more to the stone lapis lazuli than to the color, already described in the word *blew*. Adamant was a legendary stone of extreme hardness; it would be difficult to pry open hands of adamant.
- 51–55 This stanza, which initiates the second section of the poem, is linked to the previous stanza by the physical images of the body — "heart, hand, and body all" — which

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now must face death and a final accounting before the Judge. (Compare 2 Corinthians 5:10).

- 55      *Qwha rald ieto this world assur.* This is the only variation on the refrain line in the poem, a device Dunbar uses elsewhere. It presents the first in a series of rhetorical questions that occur in these final stanzas.
- 57-59    For other depictions of Fortune as an alluring whore, compare Barbour's *Bruce* 13.636-38, and *The Kingis Quair*, lines 1124-25.
- 63      *the angell blowir his bugill stane.* This is "the last trump" mentioned in several apocalyptic passages of Scripture — e.g., 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:15, and Apocalypse 11:15.
- 66      *Qwhat help is thair in loralchippis sevin.* Compare Proverbs 11:4: "Riches profit not in the day of wrath."
- 71-72    This verse is based on a passage from the liturgy for the Office of the Dead. Compare also Matthew 6:23.
- 73      *Sall cry "allace" that women thame haue.* Compare Job 3:3: "Let the day perish wherein I was born."
- 74      *O quante sunt iste tenebre.* Compare Matthew 6:23.
- 76-79    These apocalyptic verses stem from passages of Scripture such as Apocalypse 8:8 and 11:19. They also exhibit the heaviest use of alliteration in the poem, climaxing with the running alliteration of lines 77-78 and the four alliterating words of line 78.

**17. Best to Be Blythe**

Contrasting with Dunbar's bleaker moralities is a small group of poems informed by Boethian philosophy and possibly influenced by such Chaucerian works as "Truth" and The Knight's Tale. In these poems the speaker, while fully observing the falseness of the world, seeks consolation in being cheerful in the face of adversity and in being content with his lot. But the optimistic face the speaker is trying to put on in this poem — "For to be blythe me think it best" — seems to be just that, and the poem actually reflects a strong sense of personal pain.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 17*

most notably in the next-to-last stanza. Eight 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabbB*, with the *b* rhyme continuing through all stanzas. B, MF (which lacks lines 16–20), and R. Mc69, K64, Bw14.

- 1–5 The poem begins in much the same vein as several of the preceding poems, with the speaker musing on the falseness and impermanence of life in this world. But what is different here is his expressed desire to enjoy life in this world anyway; he does not view life as a vale of tears that must be endured, though he does make one brief mention of the everlasting life that is to come (line 28).
- 5 *For to be blythe me think it best.* Burcett suggests that the refrain sounds proverbial (Bw 2.319). Compare also Henryson's *Fables*, line 521: "Be blyth in baill, for that is best remed."
- 6–15 These verses concerning Fortune and her wheel reflect common sentiments in medieval literature that derive from Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. The poet's point is that by not placing one's heart in the gifts of Fortune, or by recognizing their impermanence, the inevitable fall that occurs when Fortune turns her wheel will be less painful (line 14).
- 26 *tymall.* Burcett glosses the word to mean "loss, deprivation," and she may be correct (Bw 2.319). But in this context a more specific meaning seems likely. Kinsley argues that the poet literally means "tinsel," a fabric with golden threads woven through it, a distant relative of what we call tinsel today. If that is so, Dunbar is using the term to symbolize things that appear attractive but have no real lasting value.
- 28–29 Medieval writers commonly used the phrase "The twinkling of an eye" to reflect the brevity of life; its origin is 1 Corinthians 15.52 — "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet"; compare Whiting T547.
- 31–34 These poignant, personal-sounding verses indicate that the only thing that prevented the speaker from being destroyed by the world's unkindness was his conviction that it is best "for to be blithe."
- 39 His characterization of life in this world as a *frowaffull foly* — a "deceitful dream" — is certainly a powerful indictment of it, and one wonders how successful he has been in his brave attempt to remain cheerful.

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18. *Of Content*

This poem has much in common with Dunbar's other poems on Boethian themes; the benefits of being content are also endorsed by Paul in *Philippians* 4:1 and 11, and in 1 Timothy 6:6-8, Ridley suggests that these poems "would seem to reflect Dunbar's reaction to the failure of his petitions" (1973, p. 1041), a notion worth considering; Ross observes that "the general note struck by the poem is that of Proverbs" (p. 134); and Bawcutt notes the similarity to the moralist in Henryson's fable of *The Two Mice* (1992, p. 142). Dunbar's hortatory or "preaching voice" is often in evidence, as illustrated by line 11: "Thairfor I pray yow, brede deir..." Seven 5-line stanzas rhyming ababb. R and MF (differing significantly). Mc70, K66, Bw53.

- 5       *He hes answel that is content.* The refrain line reflects a common medieval proverb (Whiting E120).
- 6       *anto Ind.* "As far as India"; India was considered to be a rich and exotic realm.
- 6-10      This stanza, which reverses the sentiments of first stanza, touches on covetousness, a topic treated more fully in another of Dunbar's moral poems — "Of Covetise" (Poem 22).
- 11       *bredir.* "Brother," i.e., "fellow human."
- 13       *Thank God of it is to thev serv.* Compare Chaucer's Boethian ballad "Truth: Ballade de Bon Conseyl," especially lines 2 and 19. Compare also "Without Gladness No Treasure Avails" (Poem 19), line 9, and the refrain in Henryson's "The Abbey Walk."
- 17       *With gall in hart and honyt hals.* I.e., "with a malicious heart and a honey-speaking mouth"; this is a common proverbial saying on the theme of hypocrisy and deceit (compare Whiting G12 and H433).
- 18       *Quda moist it servis.* "Who moist it serves"; the "it" refers to the world of line 16.
- 19       *subchervis.* The reading in R is *subchargys*. In either case, the meaning probably is something like "second servings" or "extra dishes"; it is clear from the context that eating to excess proves bitter.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 19*

- 21 *Goff thow hes mycht.* In light of Dunbar's many petition poems, it is easy to see in a verse such as this one an indirect appeal to the king for his support.
- 29 *Gif we nor clym, we tak no foll.* This verse expresses another common proverb; compare Whiting C295 and C296.
- 31-33 Also proverbial; compare Whiting C489 and 494.

**19. Without Gladness No Treasure Awain**

This is another of Dunbar's moral poems that reflects Boethian themes. While it expresses many of the same general ideas as the others, here the emphasis is on being merry (rather than on just being content) and on enjoying what life has to offer. Although the mood of the poem is not fully that of the *corpe diew* poem, it leans in that direction, reflecting Dunbar's conviction that comedy can play an important role in providing consolation. Bawcutt points out that several similar pieces in Scottish poetry, the most distinguished of which is Henryson's fable of *The Two Mice* (Bw 2.301). Five 8-line stanzas rhyming *abbbcb*. Aberdeen Minute Book, B, and MF, Mc73, K65, Bw6.

- 1 *man.* Several of Dunbar's moral poems address "man" and admonishing him to be mindful of the speaker's advice. Henryson does much the same in the *Morall Fables* applied to his *Fables*.
- 3-6 A spirit of charity and generosity flows through the entire poem. Here, in contrast to Polonius' advice to Laertes, the hearer is urged to be both a borrower and a lender, for the help he gives his neighbor now may be returned to him later. Compare Proverbs 3:28.
- 5 *His chance this ryght, it may be thine tomorrow.* Proverbial; compare Whiting T405 and T349; also Ecclesiasticus 38:23.
- 11-12 In these verses stress is placed on using and enjoying whatever one has, not on storing it away in a miserly fashion. This is a central theme in Dunbar's "Spend Thine Own Goods" (Poem 21).
- 14 *Thy lyfe in dolour ma noch lang indore.* The idea that a person cannot long survive in such a depressed state of mind is also expressed in line 34 of Dunbar's "Best to Be Blithe" (Poem 17).

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- 20      *bef ane cry.* No longer than the duration of a shout, i.e., a short time.
- 25      *Quda levis mery, he levis wicheley.* Proverbial; compare Whiting M131.
- 28–30     As was indicated in line 12, great misery attends the hoarding of goods; and here there is the additional point that others will soon come along and use them up anyway.
- 33–37     Only the basic necessities of food and clothing really matter; but if you do happen to possess great wealth, you will only enjoy it fleetingly, and you will still be held accountable for it. A more favorable final reckoning will come from a shorter list of possessions.
- 39      *treath self mak thee strong as ovy wall.* "Strong as any wall" is proverbial; compare Whiting W14–18.

**20. His Own Enemy**

This is one of Dunbar's more controversial moral poems, if in fact it is one. At first glance the poem seems straightforward enough, advising its hearers to be cheerful and to enjoy what they are fortunate enough to possess. To do otherwise, the refrain suggests, is to bring sorrow upon oneself. Yet there is a sardonic quality to this poem that sets it apart from Dunbar's other moral poems; and the third stanza, surprisingly, seems to be informed by a bawdy double entendre. The final stanza also has a flippant quality not usually seen in Dunbar's moral poems. Five 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabab*, with much alliteration. B and MF (where it is anonymous). Mc2, K70 [*Ane werkis Sorrow to him self*], Bw17.

- 1–5      In several of Dunbar's moral poems the speaker urges his hearers to be content with whatever they have, however little; here it is the inverse — use fully what you have, however much.
- 6–10     This stanza reflects sentiments found in many ME poems that satirize the evils of marriage. In most instances these anti-marriage poems also contain statements about the wickedness of women, as in line 9.
- 11–15     The figure developed in this stanza apparently concerns the danger of shooting one's arrow at an unfamiliar target rather than the customary one; but the phrases and images are rife with sexual innuendo. The speaker's warning against illicit sex.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 21*

though, has little to do with morality; it has more to do with avoiding the unpleasant physical consequences of venereal disease. Archery was a favorite pastime at the Scottish court, and the king often participated along with his courtiers (Bw 2.325).

- 12     prop. "Target"; *DOST* cites it as a current figure in Scots for a sexual mark. N.b. "gengie" ("arrow") is line 11. The Wife of Bath makes a similar joke in her send-up of St. Paul: "The dart is set up for virginitee; / Caoche whose may, who renmeth best lat see" (*CF III[D]75-76*) where "darr" (prize) becomes dart (arrow) and virginity the target (prop). The allusion is to 1 Corinthians 9:24.
- 13     *schattis*. "Shoot have sex" (Burness, p. 211).
- 13     *ancow schell*. "A strange target"; but *schell* may also mean "shell," which may imply the female sex organs. As Kinsley points out, in folklore "the correspondence between the cowrie shell and the female pudendum is a familiar theme" (K., p. 362).
- 14     *fleis of Spynie*. Literally "fleas of Spain," but probably meaning syphilis. Bawcutt quotes the Glasgow surgeon, Peter Lowe: "Amongst the Frenchmen, it is called the Spanish sickness, in England the great pox, in Scotland the Spanish Fleas, and that for two causes, the one because it began first amongst the Spaniards; the other because when the infection spreadeth . . . it is like unto red spots called flea-bitings" (Bw 2.326).
- 16-20   Considering the sentiments expressed in so many of Dunbar's petition poems, this stanza may offer a comment on his own situation, in which case his pitiless master would be the king.
- 25     *I gyf him to the Devill of Hell*. Rather than the expected final refrain, the poet gives us something with a little more punch.

**21. Spend Thine Own Goods [Thysc awin gude spend quhill thow her space]**

This poem has had its doubters and detractors — those who doubt Dunbar's authorship, and those who question the poem's worth. Scott calls it "the worst poem Dunbar wrote" (p. 258), and Mackenzie believes it is "scarcely congruous with Dunbar's usual utterances" (Mc., p. 223). While it is attributed to Dunbar in B, it is not in MF, and many commentators such as Bawcutt have noted its "several clumsy passages" (p. 144). What may be most important to observe about this poem, though, is its repudiation of miserliness; for what the speaker is

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advocating is the judicious use of one's own goods while it is still possible, that is, while you are still alive. His comments on the future misuse of one's goods and on the callous attitudes of one's heirs and relatives may seem rather cynical, but many other medieval works reflect the same sentiments. Ten quatrains rhyming *aabb*, B and MF (where it is anonymous), Mc72, K67, Bw31.

- 1-3 Many ME lyrics on death and mutability comment on the certainty of death and the uncertainty of when it will arrive; compare the ME lyric, "Wanne I thenko thinges thare" (*JMEF* 3969).
- 4 *Thynne awair gude spend quhill shaw his spase.* The refrain accords with a common ME saying; compare Whiting M59.
- 9-10 *today . . . to morne.* I.e., today (while you are alive) . . . tomorrow (when you are dead).
- 13-15 As Barcuff suggests (Bw 2.144), these lines may advise drawing up a will to prevent future strife among heirs.
- 17-19 These verses satirize the hoarder or the miser (much like the figure of Winner in the ME debate *Winner and Waster*), the person who spends all his time gathering but then never expends what he has gathered at joyful celebrations.
- 21-23 These lines comment on ungrateful heirs who care only about their own good fortune and who do not care at all about the eternal welfare of the one who has died.
- 27 *settis on awre es.* "Sets on an ace," i.e., "places a very low value on"; an ace is the one on a die. *Thre Prestis of Pebis*, lines 176-248, offers a full account of the wasteful extravagance of one's heirs.
- 33-35 I.e., "Do not assume that others will not do to you what you would never do to them; if you do, you'll learn the hard way" — a bitter comment on human nature.
- 37 *the bairne dos to the mader.* Children turning against their parents — filial ingratitude — long predates Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Compare also Ecclesiasticus 3:18, which cautions against angering your mother.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 22*

**22. Of Covetise [And all for caus of curvetice]**

This poem reflects the medieval tradition of complaints against the times, and it also has much in common with Dunbar's poems satirizing the court. The first ten stanzas offer a long list of societal ills, all of which stem from the sin of covetousness. The final stanza presents the speaker's conclusion: please your Maker, be merry, do not care about the world, and work to attain a place in Paradise, where there is no covetousness. Kinsley suggests that the poem was probably written after the Battle of Flodden in 1513, when Scottish society was thrown into great turmoil (K, p. 360), but there is nothing in the poem that explicitly or specifically substantiates that notion. Eleven quatrains rhyming *aabB*, MF and B (where it is anonymous). Mc67, K68, Bw13.

- 1–3      The virtues listed in the first two lines — which the speaker says are now considered vices — were commonly assumed to be the natural attributes of the aristocratic class.
- 4      *all for caus of curvetice*. Covetousness is the root of all evil — 1 Timothy 6:10; compare also Whiting C491.
- 9–11     The noble pastimes of hunting and hawking, he says, have now been abandoned in favor of gambling — especially for cards and dice; the more usual courtly games of chess and "tables" (backgammon) are not mentioned. Compare Lindsay's Complaint, line 83: "There was no play bet caidis and dyce."
- 29–31    The speaker is outraged by the social injustice of lords going about in long silk cloaks that trail to the ground while their tenants survive by eating roots.
- 33–35    In the first stanza it is pointed out that the noble virtues are held to be vices; now the Christian virtues also are held to be foolish. As the next stanza will point out, the man who is considered wise in these times is the one who is good at taking from others.
- 41–44    The advice offered in the final stanza is similar to that expressed elsewhere in Dunbar's moral poems; but in the face of all that has gone before in the poem, it sounds rather like a "hoe your own garden" consolation.
- 42      *And sett not by this warld a chirry*. As Blawcut notes, "A cherry typifies something of small value" (Bw 2.318). Compare Whiting C184 and 187; compare also line 8

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in the ME lyric "Farewell, this world": "This lyfe i see, is but a cherye feyre" (line 8, *MEL*, pp. 228-29).

- 44     *For thairin riegs na covetysse.* The altered refrain in the final stanza is a device Dunbar also uses in "How Should I Conduct Myself" (Poem 24) and in "Of Content" (Poem 18).

**23. Of Deceiving**

Although attributed to "Stewarte" in MF, B assigns it to Dunbar, and most scholars have accepted that attribution. (Mackenzie, however, demurs.) The poem condemns the human failing of speaking ill of others, what in the Middle Ages was often called "backbiting," a common form of the sin of envy. After suggesting that no one is immune from vicious gossip, the speaker's anger at such behavior rises to near fever pitch (lines 41-45) when he expresses his desire to take vengeance on those who judge others, something he resists doing only because it would serve to make matters worse. Ultimately he accepts the wise advice of King James IV — to live virtuously and ignore malicious tongues. Perhaps implicit in the poem is the biblical admonition: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1). Some commentators have seen in line 26 — "be I but little of sthare" — and line 31 — "be I ornate in my speech" — references to the poet's personal characteristics. Eleven 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabba*, with variations on the refrain. B, and two versions in MF (neither attributed to Dunbar). Mc8, K81, Bw33.

- 1-5     This stanza employs a common device to introduce the topic of the poem. The voice the narrator hears in line 4 — the voice of a moralizing preacher — is presumably the speaking voice throughout the poem until the final stanza, when the narrator's own voice resumes. Since no further mention is made of the voice the narrator hears, perhaps we can assume it is his inner thoughts he is listening to.
- 3     *Within one garth undir a tre.* Compare line 1 in Henryson's *Praise of Age*: "Wythin a garth, under a red rosere," and lines 4-5 in *The Tretis of the Twa Marit Wemen and the Wedo* (Poem 54).
- 6-35     These six stanzas suggest that no one remains unjudged, not king, nobleman, lady, courtier, knight, small man, huge man, or ornate speaker.
- 14     *Thoschr he dwe not to leid a tyk.* Compare *The Flying of Dunbar and Kennedy* (Poem 83), line 114.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 24*

- 18      *scho and he*, "She and he," i.e., everyone, both men and women.
- 19      In this context *jaixir* probably implies "seduced"; presumably the gossips are impugning the lady's moral behavior. The phrase *laist and fair* — "late and early" — reverses the usual word order of this common expression for the sake of rhyme but still means "constantly."
- 24–25    "God send them a strong rope" with which to be hanged — sentiments elaborated on in lines 41–44.
- 26      "Be I but little of stature" may be a reference to the poet's small physical size, which is alluded to elsewhere in Dunbar's poetry and perhaps most directly in his *Flying with Kennedy* (Poem 83), who repeatedly calls Dunbar a "dwarf."
- 32      The name *Towsy* is used to suggest a frowzy, sharp-tongued, peasant woman. Compare *Christis Kirk*, line 54.
- 34      *Suppois air mowth misteris a leiche*. I.e., "despite the fact that her own speech is so fractured as to require surgery"; her speech, one might say, is uncouth.
- 46–47    These verses seem to indicate that King James IV, who was born in 1473, is no longer young; James was killed in battle at Flodden in 1513, but was obviously alive at the time the poem was written.
- 48–50    While the wisdom contained in verses 49–50 is attributed to King James IV, the verses actually paraphrase Matthew 7:1–2. Perhaps the poet means to flatter the king (as he does in some of his petitions); or perhaps there is some irony here, a device only rarely used by Dunbar.
- 51–55    The final sentiments are similar in a general way to what is expressed in several of Dunbar's more conventional moral poems, poems in which the poet expresses his belief that he will escape the unfairness of this life in the life to come.

**24. How Should I Conduct Myself [Lord God, how should I governe me]**

Ridley aptly describes this poem as a companion piece to the preceding poem (1973, p. 1010), although the behavior the speaker here deplores is malicious speaking, which was commonly viewed as a sub-category of the sin of envy. Several other ME lyrics also deplore this vice

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(compare, e.g., *MEP* 1633 and Lydgate's "A wicked tunge wille soye amys"), and Barcatt is correct in suggesting that the poem "treats a didactic theme very common in the late Middle Ages" (Bw 2.326). Like several of Dunbar's poems in this general vein, the poem not only offers a negative critique of slanderous speech but also reflects the speaker's determination to ignore such behavior and to be governed (and judged) by God, MF, B, and R. There are significant differences between the MF and B texts; and each of them has virtues and each has flaws. Nine 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabab*. Mc9, K82, Bw18.

- 9      *cosfort*. Kinsley suggests the implication here is that someone has given him strong drink; Barcatt suggests (Bw 2.326) the implication is that he has been comforted by having received sexual favors; either could be right. Or perhaps people assume that his jaunty behavior stems from certain financial benefactions.
- 17     *paramour*. This is an adverbial usage of the noun *paramour*; to love *paramour* is to love sexually, perhaps illicitly.
- 28     *not worth a fly*. "Not worth a fly" is a proverbial phrase for something of little value. See Whiting F345. Compare Chaucer (*CT* V[F]1132; VII[B']172; VIII[G] 1150) and Henryson (*Fables*, lines 2054 and 2286).
- 41-45    The sentiments here expressed are similar to those in lines 49-55 of the previous poem.

**25. Rule of Oneself [He rewiliis weill that weill himself can gyf]**

One of the most sententious of Dunbar's moralizing poems, "Rule of Oneself" provides advice, not about how to live life generally, but about how to survive the vagaries of life at court. Thus the speaker's words of advice to his "friend" (who is also referred to as his "son"), inevitably bring to mind Polonius' advice to Laertes, though there was an ancient tradition of works that offer similar counsel that long predicated either Dunbar or Shakespeare. (See Bw 2.483.) While the poem conveys no sense that the speaker himself is being satirized, there can be no doubt that life at court is. Barcatt observes that the poem "has had few admirers" (1992, p. 141), a circumstance not likely to change. Six 8-line stanzas rhyming *ababbcbcC*. B only. Mc41, K77, Bw81.

- 1-2      The speaker's initial observation seems crucial — if you wish to dwell at court, do not desire the gifts of fortune. Although he does not explain himself here, he does

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 25*

later on: such gifts are "væland" (line 41), that is, constantly changing and untrustworthy. Compare Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, II, prose 2.

- 3     *for thy tong tol rest.* This is the first of many references in the poem to the importance of speaking in all of its varieties, including false-speaking and malicious-speaking; especially important is minding one's own tongue.
- 8     *He rewilt wel that weill himself can gyd.* Compare the refrain here and in lines 16, 24, 32, 40, and 48 with Chaucer's "Truth: Ballade de Bon Conseil": "Reule wel thyself that other folk canst rede" (line 6). Compare Whiting M414, R231, and G407.
- 9-16    This stanza focuses on the importance of choosing one's friends wisely, another topic treated throughout the poem.
- 15     *Cum sancto sanctio viris.* See Psalm 17:26 in the Vulgate.
- 17-24    This advice on being content reflects the sentiments expressed in some of Dunbar's other moral poems — e.g., "Of Content" (Poem 18) — as well as elaborating upon the first two verses of the poem.
- 19     *Be thou content, of mair thou heys no neid.* Compare the refrain of "Of Content" (Poem 18).
- 21     *Chakmat.* "Checkmate," the word signifying the end of a chess match.
- 25-32    This stanza merges the themes of keeping good company with keeping well one's tongue.
- 33-40    These verses offer the most overt statement of the wisdom of following the expedient course — for if you do not, your behavior may bounce back at you and "strike you in the neck" (line 36). It becomes very clear that the principal object at court is self-preservation. The implications of these verses also recall the "moral message" contained in Chaucer's Manciple's Tale about the tale-telling crow.
- 33-34    Compare Ecclesiasticus 21:28: "The lips of the unwise will be telling foolish things; but the words of the wise shall be weighed in a balance."
- 35-36    Proverbial (Whiting 592).

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- 41-48 Only in this final stanza does a Christian element appear — hold God for your friend, do not mistreat the poor, and wrong no man at any time.

**26. Discretion in Asking [In asking world discretion hys]**

This is the first in a series of three superficially similar poems: poems that share the same form, have similar refrains, and reflect a central concern with "discretion." In fact, though, they are quite distinctive pieces. This one is the least satirical of the three, the most optimistic, and has the most in common with Dunbar's moral poems, though its advice is of a decidedly worldly kind. In essence, it outlines the best ways to go about asking for deserved rewards. Overall the tone is quite hopeful, though the poem ends on a rather bleak note by pointing out that if this advice is unsuccessful, there is little to be done about it. This is one of Dunbar's moral poems that also has some affinities to his petition poems. Nine 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabbaB*. B (two versions), MF (where it is anonymous), and R. Mc14, K78, Bw44.

- 1-4 To begin with, the speaker says, one must have good cause before asking; if there is no justification for reward, that will be perceived.
- 6-9 Do not be constantly asking, for it will dall the ears of your listeners. Compare Proverbs 30:15.
- 11-14 Some ask for more than they deserve, some for less, and some (like the speaker) are too shamefaced to ask, and thus they go unawarded. This last comment seems to provide a link with Dunbar's petition poems. These sentiments also bring to mind the various groups of petitioners in Chaucer's *HF* (lines 1553-1867).
- 16-19 Do not ask without having served, and do not hesitate to ask for service. But to have served and still to live in poverty is shameful both to the master and the servant — another comment that reflects sentiments expressed in Dunbar's petition poems.
- 21-24 Similar to the advice in the second stanza, here the suggestion is, do not spoil your good works by constant importuning.
- 22 May spill it all with crablis and cryis. Compare King Hart, line 903, and Lindsay's Satyre, line 2220.
- 24 Few words may serve the wyx. This is a well-known saying; compare Whiting W588.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 27*

- 26–27     *Nocht neidfull is men sowld be dum,* / *Nothing is gottin but wordis sum.* Compare Whiting M276: "Seldom gets a dumb man land."
- 29     *For nathing it allane will cum.* Compare Whiting N151: "Nothing has its being of sought."
- 31–32     *Aking wold half convenient place,* / *Convenient tyme, lassar, and spae.* Compare Proverbs 15.23 and Ecclesiastes 8.6.
- 36–39     Biding your time may result in a "yes," when pressing your suit may result in many "no's."
- 38     *All for that tyme nor byd can he.* Compare *The Kingis Quair*, line 926, and Whiting T303.
- 41–42     A lord will ultimately reward his servant, even if he has to go unrewarded for a long time — yet another comment that brings to mind Dunbar's petition poems.

**27. Discretion in Giving [In gering sowld discretioune ha]**

The second in the interconnected sequence of poems on discretion in asking, giving, and taking, this one concerns such things as the reasons for which people give, the manners in which they give, and the attitudes with which they give. A good deal of attention is paid to the selfish motives of the givers and to the unworthy causes or individuals to which they give. Although giving alms and providing for the poor were important Christian responsibilities (compare lines 25–32 in "The Table of Confession" [Poem 7]), here the emphasis is on satirizing the vanity and foolishness of givers rather than applauding their charity. Twelve 5-line stanzas rhyming aabab. B (two versions), MF, and R. Mc15, K79, Bn45.

- 1–5     The reasons for giving listed here seem noble until we discover at the end of line 4 that the recipients have little need of reward.
- 8–9     Both verses suggest that the giver is giving in the selfish hope of gaining more in return.
- 14     *Gifnis fru sum me no man treit.* The verse suggests that we are offered gifts by some people that we simply must not accept.

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- 16–19 The too long overdue gift — or the “too little, too late” gift — expresses a sentiment found in many of Dunbar’s petition poems. Compare Henryson’s *Fables*, line 2269, and Whiting T45.
- 21–30 These two stanzas play off the miserly giver against the excessive giver, condemning both.
- 26–27 As Bawcutt observes, “The figure of the overladen boat or barge had various medieval applications (see Whiting B422 and S249). Here, it refers to an over-generous man, loaded with debts, who founders financially” (Bw 2.381).
- 31–40 This pair of stanzas expresses familiar sentiments in Dunbar’s poetry, the first deplored the giving of gifts to those who do not need them while ignoring those who do, the second deplored the practice of rewarding strangers with fresh faces while ignoring familiar faces who have served long and well.
- 36–37 Dunbar is frequently aggrieved by the generosity of the court to foreign newcomers, while familiar longtime servers are ignored. Compare “To the King” (Poem 47), line 69.
- 41–44 Here the poet presents a contrasting pair within a single stanza, with a positive example of discretion in giving (one of the few in the poem) being used to counter-balance a negative one.
- 46–50 This stanza satirizes court flatterers and yes-men, of which “there are many such now in these days” (line 49), verses reminiscent of Chaucer’s Nun’s Priest’s Tale (CT VIII[B<sup>7</sup>]3325–30).
- 56–60 The final stanza focuses on the giving of benefices and clerical offices to the undeserving or incompetent, which again brings to mind the central concern in many of Dunbar’s petition poems.
- 57 *Saint Bernard*: St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the great twelfth-century theologian and founder of the Cistercian monastic order.
- 58 *Saint Bryd*: St. Bride (a variant on the name St. Bridget), who was an Irish abbess in the sixth century; many Scottish churches are dedicated to her.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 28*

#### **28. Discretion in Taking [De taking swold discretione he]**

The third poem in this sequence offers the most overt social criticism, attacking those members of society that "take" from others through various immoral and illegal means. In contrast to the previous two poems, which offer some positive examples of "asking" and "giving," there is little here but selfish grasping. In fact, throughout much of the poem "taking" is merely a euphemism for stealing. Eight 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabab*, B, MF, and R. Mc16, K80, Bw46.

- 1      *Eftir giving I speik of takeng.* The first verse provides a direct link back to the previous poem. For the linkage between "giving" and "taking," compare Acts 20:35; compare also Whiting G93-94.
- 2      *Bor hinnill of ony gud forsaking* is in fact an understatement, since the poet does not speak at all of anything that could be described as "good forsaking," that is, refusing to take what one should not take.
- 3-4     In typical fashion, Dunbar contrasts those who refuse to take enough authority with those who insist upon taking too much. Each extreme is folly.
- 6-15    In this pair of stanzas the satire is first against greedy clerics who take income from their ecclesiastical holdings while caring little for the spiritual welfare of their parishioners, and then against greedy barons who gouge their tenants — actions in both cases that are immoral rather than strictly illegal. As Bawcutt points out, "sympathy for the rural poor is rare in Dunbar, and recalls Henryson" (Bw 2.382). Compare Henryson's fable of the wolf and the lamb, *Fables*, lines 2728-62.
- 6      *The clerks takis beneficis with bruselis.* Bawcutt notes that "Disputes between churchmen over rich benefices were common, and occasionally turned into pitched battles" (Bw 2.382).
- 13     *Mavis and gressoses,* terms often used together in legal documents, refer to the annual rents and payments tenants are charged by their overlords, payments in money or in kind; in this case those charges are so excessive that the tenants are forced to become beggars.
- 15     MF includes a stanza here that is not in B:  

Thir merchandis takis ulesum wis  
Quhilk makis thair pakkin oftymes fall this;

*unlawful*

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Be thair successions ye may see  
That ill won gair riches not the kin  
In taking sold discretion be.

*goods enrich*

Mackenzie includes the stanza within his text. Barwick prints it in her notes.

- 16-30 In these three stanzas, in contrast to the previous two, the focus is on varieties of theft, illegal practices that may result in harsh punishments if the perpetrators are caught.
- 27-29 Here the moral consequences and the legal consequences of these actions are compared; it is too bad, the poet says, that people are more afraid of being found out by other men than they are of being found out by God.
- 31-35 These verses contrast the insatiably greedy (lines 31-33) with the person who takes so little that he cannot succeed (line 34), the only time in the poem the poet faults someone for not taking.
- 36-40 The final stanza comments on the great social injustice reflected by the fact that the powerful receive acclaim for their taking while the poor are cruelly punished and their families are shamed. Compare Lindsay's *Satyre*, lines 2657-68, and Whiting T68.

**29. Dunbar at Oxford [Ane pevallour seiknes is none prosperit]**

Although the colophon in the second version of the text in MF reads "Dunbar at Oxinfurde," there are no specifics in the poem to justify that association, nor is there any historical evidence that Dunbar was ever in Oxford, either as a visitor or a student. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the poem addresses learned scholars, reminding them that their wisdom is of little worth if they fail to live good lives — that moral wisdom surpasses all other wisdom. Whether or not it is "a rather dull piece," as Barwick suggests (1992, p. 151), she is certainly right in pointing out that it lacks local color. The poem's chief interest lies in the way it celebrates the intellectual achievements of scholars while exhorting them to maintain their moral grounding. MF (two slightly variant texts) and R. Three 8-line stanzas rhyming *ababcbC*, with varying refrain. Mc53, K76, Bw82.

- 1-8 The opening stanza addresses intellectual achievements in a general way, as line 4 clearly suggests, referring to "every field of study, every subject, every discipline."

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- 7      *the fyne*, "The end," probably meant in several senses — "the end result" of their endeavor, "the end of life," and the "end" they achieve after the end of life. Compare Chaucer's TC 5.1828–34. Compare also Ecclesiasticus 7:36 and Whiting E84.
- 8      *An speralous seiknes ir nane prosperite*. Compare Henryson's *Fable*, line 291, and Whiting P420–23.
- 9–16     The second stanza addresses more directly the academic fields common to the medieval university. Logic (line 9) and rhetoric (line 10), along with grammar, are the verbal arts comprising the trivium. The mathematical arts of the quadrivium are suggested by astronomy (line 12) and natural science (line 11), the study of natural phenomena. Theology and literature (line 13) would be more specialized fields of study.
- 12     Bawcutt believes this line "suggests suspicion of the branch of astronomy now called astrology" (Bw 2.485).
- 17     Here the use of direct address creates the "preaching voice" often heard in Dunbar's moral poems.
- 19–20    Two of the most effective verses in the poem, they simultaneously praise scholars for being shining lamps in the darkness, while urging them to be mirrors to us — i.e., moral examples — in the way they govern their own lives. Compare 2 Kings (2 Samuel) 22:29.
- 20     *Lampis*. I.e., sources of moral and intellectual illumination.
- 22     *Gyff to yowr swetis your deidis contrar be*. Compare Whiting W642.

**30. *The Thistle and the Rose***

Dunbar's celebration of the impending marriage of James IV of Scotland to Princess Margaret Tudor of England was first given the title "The Thressill and the Rose" by James Ramsay in his *Ever Green* (1724), by which it has been known ever since. Although the wedding did not take place until August of 1503, the poem was apparently composed for an earlier occasion, perhaps in May of that year, for the poet states near the end of the poem that he "wret . . . / Of lusty May upon the nynt morrow" (lines 188–89). It is possible that it was presented at a

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public ceremony marking the beginning of summer, as several scholars have suggested. Certainly the poem reflects well upon ambitions of court entertainment of the kind James IV adored. Louise Fradenburg puts the matter well: "The poem is spectacular; and while we have no external evidence to suggest that it was performed to the accompaniment of dancing, costume or 'machinery,' its poetics . . . are clearly those of the court masque — of shifting 'scenes,' visual astonishment, splendid 'discrying'" (p. 173).

The poem blends several genres and traditions. It is both an epithalamium and an elegant love vision in the French dream-vision tradition, and it pays particular homage to Chaucer's dream visions, especially *PV*. Along the way the poem incorporates many elements from classical myth, animal fable tradition, medieval natural histories and herbals, heraldry, Scottish folklore, Scripture, and the imagery of medieval lyrics in praise of the Virgin Mary. Seventy-seven 7-line stanzas rhyming ababbcc (rhyme royal). B only. Mc55, K50, Bw52.

- 1-7 This otherwise conventional description of spring — with its April showers, May flowers, and songbirds singing the divine hours — contains an unexpected reference to the *orient blair* (line 3), which is not the gentle west wind, Chaucer's "Zephirus . . . with his sweete breeth" (CT I[A]5). This reference is elaborated upon in lines 29-35, where the wind is identified as "Lord Eolus" (line 33), and again in lines 64-70; in Greek mythology, Aeolus is the king of the winds.
- 4 *And lusty May, that smadir is of floweris.* A probable echo of lines from Chaucer's *TC*: "In May, that moder is of monthes glade, / That fresshe floures, blew and white and rede, / Ben quike agayn, that wynter dede made" (*TC* 2.50-2). Compare also Douglas, *The Palis of Honoure*, line 65.
- 5 *mid the birdis to begyn their houres.* By the fifteenth century, the description of the birds' singing as the singing of the divine hours had become a commonplace, occurring in poem after poem.
- 8 *In bed at morrow sleeping as I lay.* Chaucer's dreamer in *The Book of the Duchess* is similarly "awakened" while lying in his bed at dawn in the month of May (lines 291 ff.).
- 9 Aurora's cristall' eue refers to the morning dew, the tears the dawn-goddess sheds for her son Memnon, who was killed at Troy. Compare lines 1-2 of Dunbar's "The Merle and the Nightingale" (Poem 66) and the first line of Douglas' *The Palis of Honoure*.

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- 11 *visage puill and grene*. Ross interprets the phrase as referring to the dreamer, whom he sees as a "typical Ovidian lover" (p. 242); it more likely refers to Aurora.
- 12 *On quhois hand a lark song fro the spewe*. The lark, Aurora's bird, is the traditional announcer of the dawn.
- 15–21 This description of the personified figure of May focuses on her wondrous raiment, which reflects the loveliest attributes of the month. Compare *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), lines 82–90. Evans (1987) points out that May wears the Tudor colors — perhaps alluding to the May-January theme of Chaucer's Merchant's Tale (pp. 98–99).
- 22 Compare the opening verses of Robert Herrick's "Corinna's Going A-Maying."
- 23 May's command, that the narrator write something in her honor, is fulfilled by the poem itself, as he tells us in the final lines: "And thus I wret . . . / Of lusty May upon the nynt morow" (lines 188–89).
- 26–35 The narrator's lack of desire to write songs, which May says has not always been the case, stems from the atypical May weather, which many readers have seen as reflecting his internal landscape — is he perhaps a forlorn lover? — rather than the actual weather. The effect, in any case, is to create a narrative persona similar to the narrators in Chaucer's dream poems. Compare Geffrey's apathy for learning in *HF* lines 994–95. Evans (1987) reads this stanza as Dunbar's evidence "that a court poet is sometimes encouraged to describe things more favorably than seems natural in a grumpy, early-morning mood" (p. 97). In addition, Evans suggests that throughout the poem, Dunbar — a poet who would have found it difficult not to satirize a marriage between "such discrepancies in age and sophistication" — alludes to the May-January theme in dealing with James and Margaret (pp. 98–99).
- 33 *Lord Eolus daxt in thy sesoun ring*. In Scottish tradition Aeolus takes on the characteristics of Boreas, the north wind (Bw 2.397). Compare Henryson's reference to his "blastis boreally" *Fables*, line 1693.
- 37 *Upys and do thy obseruance*. Compare Chaucer's Knight's Tale: "The sesoun priketh every gentil bente / . . . And seith, "Arys, and do thy obseruance'" (CT II[A]1043–45).

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- 38–39 These verses seem to suggest that the poet had agreed to write a poem honoring Princess Margaret that would be performed on a particular occasion during the month of May.
- 44 *a hasty gairding gent*. The lovely garden that May enters, and into which the narrator sees himself go also, reflects the general medieval topos of the *locus amoenus*; its more specific literary model, however, is the garden of Nature in Chaucer's *PF*.
- 45–46 These verses in B (see textual notes) are clearly flawed, for the poet surely would not have repeated the phrases *full hestely* and *full haitely* in successive lines. Various emendations have been proposed. I suggest keeping the MS reading in line 46 and emending the phrase in line 45 to *sa fately*.
- 56 *Doing all table fro the hevynis chace*. Compare "The Merle and the Nightingale" (Poem 66), line 1–2.
- 62–63 The birds salute five personified ladies — May, Flora, Aurora, Nature, and Venus — but from this point on the focus is exclusively on the figure of Nature, as she presides over the activities in her garden.
- 64–70 Nature is God's "vicaire general" ("chief deputy"), as Chaucer puts it in The Physician's Tale (CT VII[C]20), and because she has control over the natural elements, she is able to instruct the lesser deities of water (Neptune), wind (Aeolus), and sky (Juno) to do her bidding. In Douglas' *The Palis of Honour*, similarly, Aeolus and Neptune, along with "ald Saturne," are similarly excluded from Nature's garden (lines 49–52). Compare Lindsay's *Monarchie*, line 185. Nature's injunction to Aeolus, Neptune, and Juno is a reminder that the marriage between Margaret and James is acting as a peace treaty after James supported Perkin Warbeck's rebellion against Henry VII in 1499. Evans (1987) says that "the presence of the Medieval literary goddess suggests that the English-Scottish marriage was prompted by Reason and blessed by God; consequently, the once inimical nations should flourish now in peace and harmony" (p. 101).
- 71–77 In Chaucer's *PF*, set on Valentine's Day, Nature assembles all the birds to select their mates for the coming year. Here Nature not only summons all the birds but also all the beasts and flowers, who come and do homage to her, their maker. Dunbar's other specific literary model for this portrayal of Nature is found in Richard Holland's *The Howlat*, where Nature also presides over an assembly of her creatures.

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- 75     *As they had wont in May fro yeir to yeir.* Compare Chaucer's *PF*, line 321.
- 76–77   These verses reflect the feudalistic practice of doing homage to one's superior (Bw 2.398). The staging of such practices became a principal court entertainment in James IV's reign. Few poets have been more skilled than Dunbar in celebrating (or mocking) the style of court pageantry. Enid Welsford, long ago, astutely observed that Dunbar saw "nature" through the "medium of courtly pageant; the artificiality of which his poetry has been accused is an artifice that strives, like the masque, to empower illusion to give evanescence an essence" (Fraderberg, p. 173, paraphrasing Welsford, p. 74).
- 78–84   Nature sends her three messengers to summon the three sets of living things. The first two messengers, the swift roe and the restless swallow, are understandable enough. The third messenger is the *yarrow*, or *milfoil*, a daisy-like flower which according to Kinsley was "said to be used by witches to give them speed on night rides" (K, p. 352); but it may have been selected simply because of the way this wild flower spreads so rapidly across the fields.
- 87     *first the lyone, gretast of degré.* The lion is the king of the beasts in animal fable tradition, bestiaries, and in other symbolic contexts, but he is also the central figure in the royal arms of Scotland and by this time had become the traditional emblem of the Scottish king. In the poem he is the first of the triad of royal figures — Lion, Eagle, and Thistle — each of whom stands for James IV of Scotland.
- 93–102   Here Dunbar's flattery of James rests not just in representing the king as a regal lion, but "by making him an actual replica of the royal arms of Scotland," that is, crowned, on a field of gold, and surrounded by fleur-de-lis (Ridley, 1990, p. 357). Ridley's discussion engages many examples of Dunbar's use of animal and heraldic imagery in specific poems (Poems 3, 49, 54, and 84), commenting that he consistently turns "man into creature" (p. 359). But her essay is particularly useful in this context because it compares Dunbar's use of animal imagery to Robert Henryson's. Henryson's poetry, particularly his *Moral Fables*, uses animal imagery in a more general way than Dunbar. In Fable II, for example, the discussion between the country mouse and the town mouse over the former's coarse diet reveals more about the author's reading of bourgeois attitudes towards the poor than it does about one particular person (see lines 208–35, quoted in Ridley). Ridley argues that, whereas Dunbar's subjects are animalized to achieve a specific, self-related effect (e.g., humiliating Walter Kennedy or getting a Christmas bonus from the king).

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Henryson's poetry takes place in an animalized world to effect social or moral change.

- 103–12 In this coronation ceremony in which Nature makes the lion king of the beasts, she instructs him to protect the people and uphold the laws, and to apply the laws equally to all and exercise justice with mercy.
- 110–12 These verses may imply that the king has a responsibility to make the Highlander — the *bosgile* ("wild ox," line 110) — and the Lowlander — the *meik plach ox* ("the gentle plough ox," line 111) — work together in harmony.
- 117 *homage and fealty*. "Formal acknowledgement of allegiance by a vassal to his lord" (Bw 2.398).
- 119 *parcere prostratis*. "To show mercy to the downtrodden"; Dunbar is quoting a part of a well-known Latin maxim: *Parcere prostratis scit nobilis ira leonis* ("the noble wrath of the lion knows how to spare those who are prostrated before him").
- 120–26 The eagle, the traditional king of the birds, receives far less attention than the lion and the thistle, the two more familiar symbols of Scottish royalty. But like the lion, the eagle is told to uphold justice for all birds, the weak (e.g., the wrens, line 124) as well as the strong. This second ceremony in the poem, Dunbar's "parliament of fowls," alludes, as Evans (1987) sees it, to the agreement between James and Henry to cease border warfare by not allowing the other country's criminals to take refuge over the border. Nature sharpens the eagle's feathers to make him a better law enforcer (pp. 102–03). In "To the King" (Poem 48), lines 26–29, King James is also depicted as an eagle who rules over his kingdom.
- 130 *a buische of spetris*. I.e., the many large thorns and prickly foliage that surround the flower of the spear thistle. The thistle had only recently been adopted as a royal emblem, and it symbolized the king's duty to protect his kingdom from invasion (Bw 2.399).
- 131–33 Here Nature refers to the king's responsibility to be the defender of his people and their leader in war.
- 134–47 Commentators agree that this lengthy passage urging the thistle to maintain a well-ordered garden is also meant as an admonition to King James against future sexual indiscretions. As Spearing observes, "James IV was a notorious womaniser, and it

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 30*

is known that in the very summer of his marriage he had left the court in order to renew acquaintance with an old flame" (p. 214).

- 138     *Hir follow to.* "To be her equal," i.e., allow her to receive the same (sexual) favors.
- 138-40   The *gudly flour delycer*, the fleur-de-lis, which is either the lily or the iris. Perhaps both the iris and the lily (mentioned specifically in line 140) represent Princess Margaret, as the rose in the following stanza certainly does.
- 142     The "fresh rose of color red and white," the chief symbol in the poem for Princess Margaret, reflects that fact that she is the daughter of Elizabeth of York (the white rose) and Henry of Lancaster (the red rose). The Tudor rose, in which the white rose is enclosed within the red rose, combines the two.
- 144-54   Nature's great praise of the rose — of her virtue, beauty, and perfection — accords with descriptions of the rose found in medieval herbals and other works of natural history, where the rose is often exalted as the chief of all flowers. The phrases *Imperiall bryth* (line 147) and *stok ryell* (line 151) allude once again to her royal parentage, and the phrase *Abof the lilly* (line 150) may suggest not only the rose's superiority to the lily but the superiority of English royalty to French royalty, commonly symbolized by the lily.
- 153     *Come, blowme of joy, with jemis to be crownd.* This verse may echo Canticle of Canticles 4.8 — "Come . . . my spouse, . . . come: thou shalt be crowned from the top of Amana" — a verse usually associated in the Middle Ages with the Virgin Mary.
- 162-82   The narrator's dream concludes with the birds singing in praise of the rose; first there is a succession of individual birdsongs — by the mavis, the merle, the lark, and the nightingale — and then all the birds sing in unison. Ross describes this as "a secular *Salve Regina*" (p. 248), and it does contain many images commonly found in "Adoration of the Virgin" poetry.
- 180     *perle.* Probably a play on the name Margaret, whose Latin form is *margarita*, meaning "pearl."
- 183-89   The shouting of the birds similarly awakens Chaucer's dream-narrator in *PF*, lines 693-95. The specific date given here, the ninth morrow of May, is also the date Douglas gives for writing the Prologue to his *Ecuador*. The ninth of May was the

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Feast of the Translation of St. Nicholas, "sometimes regarded as the first day of summer" (Bawcutt, 1992, pp. 74–75), and thus may have provided an occasion for Scottish court revels. Chaucer had also given a specific date for the writing of his dream vision *HF*, in that case 10 December.

- 187      *Ther up I leseyt, balfriegis te affrey.* Compare line 140 in "Of the Passion of Christ" (Poem 2).

**31. To Princess Margaret [Welcom of Scotland to be quene]**

This brief and possibly fragmentary lyric in praise of Princess Margaret is commonly attributed to Dunbar, though it is anonymous in its unique MS text, the appendix to BL Royal 58, an early sixteenth-century collection of English madrigals. Its style, diction, and imagery suggest Dunbar's authorship, and, if that is true, it is the only one of Dunbar's poems we can be certain was set to music. According to Ross: "This piece is set in the key of F major/D minor, and the last note of the first stanza in the tonic F. This fact and the range of the part suggest it is the bass of a madrigal. There is an interlude of instrumental music following the two stanzas presented in the manuscript, which is in keeping with the idea that the music formed part of a pageant" (p. 205). In addition to its praise of Margaret, the poem also celebrates her parents, the Tudor monarch Henry VII and his wife Elizabeth of York. Four 4-line stanzas rhyming *aabß*, with the refrain repeated twice in the final stanza. BL Royal MS 58. Mc89, K24. (Bawcutt excludes it from her edition.)

- 5      *Yossege tender plant.* Margaret was thirteen at the time of her marriage to James in 1503. Compare line 2 in "To Princess Margaret" (Poem 32).
- 6      *Descreyd of impereialle blode.* This verse pays tribute to Margaret's noble lineage, and is surely meant as a compliment to Henry VII.
- 10–11    Once again the poet compliments the English King Henry, this time along with his wife Elizabeth, *a princes most serene* (line 11).
- 13      The rose bothe red and whyte is the Tudor rose, formed by the union of the red rose of Lancaster and the white rose of York. Compare lines 148–61 in "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30).

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 32*

- 15 *Oure spreit rejoynysing frane the zone beme.* A problematic line in both sound and sense; it has too many syllables and an imperfect rhyme; I have followed Kinsley in emending *spreite* to *spreit*.

**32. To Princess Margaret [Gladethe, thow queyne of Scottis regiouer]**

The text of this poem in praise of Margaret Tudor is found only in the Aberdeen Minute Book, where "q dñbar" is written beneath the final stanza, and most of the editors and commentators have accepted this ascription. The poem is a rather conventional panegyric in which the young queen — she was thirteen at the time of her marriage to James in 1503 — is portrayed as the epitome of beauty, goodness, and refinement. The poet especially uses two sets of comparisons in praising her. The first involves comparing her to various gemstones and plays upon the Latin word *margarita* (meaning "pearl"), the gem that surpasses all others. The second involves flower imagery, particularly emphasizing red and white roses, and plays upon Margaret Tudor's Lancastrian and Yorkist family lineage. The flower images are also associated with the desire clearly stated in the poem for "A plaut to spring of thi successoun" (line 30), who would be an heir to continue the Scottish royal line. Since Margaret's first child was born in 1507, when she was seventeen, the poem was almost certainly written before that date. Five 8-line stanzas rhyming ababbcbC. Aberdeen Minute Book, Mc90, K31, Bw15.

- 2-3 *Ting tensir plasir of plesand palcriside, / Fresche flowr of youthe, new germynge to burgeon.* While these verses celebrate the freshness of Margaret's beauty, they also reflect the fact that she was very young when she married James. The use of alliteration, as in line 2, occurs frequently throughout the poem.
- 2 Compare line 5 in "To Princess Margaret" (Poem 31).
- 4-6 The paired images of "Our pearl of price" and "Our chosen ruby of high imperial blood" in lines 4-5 not only celebrate her beauty and value but reflect the white and red colors of the Tudor rose mentioned in line 6. The phrase "pearl of great price" originates in the biblical parable in Matthew 13:46.
- 5 *charbunkle.* The carbuncle, or ruby, which was believed to radiate light in the darkness, was often used by Scottish poets as an emblem of great perfection. Compare Douglas' praise of Virgil in *Enraged* 1.Prol.7.
- 10 *Lodstair.* A lodestar is a guiding star such as the North Star.

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- 11–12 Polyxena was the beautiful and accomplished daughter of Priam and Hecuba of Troy. Pallas is Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom.
- 13 *Mastres of nartur and of nobilnes*. This line praises her refined behavior. In *The Three Prestis of Pebisir*, peasants possess neither "nartour nor nobilnes" (line 328).
- 17–24 Natura is the goddess Natura, the creator of all natural creatures. These verses recall the passage in Chaucer's Physician's Tale concerning Natura's creation of Virginia (CT VII[C]30–71).
- 29–31 Here the poet states explicitly the desire of the Scots for an heir to ensure the succession of the monarchy. Producing such an heir was "A queen's most important duty" (Bw 2.321).
- 33–39 Margaret, the "perle of price" (line 4) and *Fair gem of joy* (line 39), is here compared to the gemstones beryl, diamond, sapphire, emerald, and ruby; she embodies all of their finest qualities and even surpasses them in those qualities. Compare the ME lyrics JMEV 1394 ("Annot and John") and 752 ("A Lover's Farewell"), lines 89–96.
- 38 *Moir riche na is the ruby of renowne*. The ruby was often valued above all the other gemstones (compare Whiting R227); compare also Proverbs 31:10, where a virtuous woman is said to be more valuable than rubies.

**33. To Aberdeen [Be blyth and blisfull, burgh of Aberdeen]**

One of Dunbar's most topical poems, "To Aberdeen" celebrates Queen Margaret's visit to the burgh in May of 1511. The poem describes the colorful pageantry surrounding the royal visit, appearing to be an eyewitness account, and is a paean not only to the queen but also to the burgh. The poem has nine stanzas, seven of which depict the city's joyous and elaborate welcome to the queen. Those seven stanzas are enclosed within a pair of stanzas that offer balanced apostrophes, with the opening stanza addressing "Blyth Aberdeane, thow beriall of all touris, / The lamp of bewtie" (lines 1–2), and the final stanza addressing Margaret — "O potent princes, pleasant and preclair" (line 65). The poem's final stanza, though, rather than preventing a lavish eulogy to the queen, focuses more on the fact that she should be thankful to the citizens of this burgh, who have pulled out all the stops for her. As Fradenburg notes, the poem attests "the strongly visual character of much of [Dunbar's] writing and the court's

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 33*

interest in pageants and entertainments" (p. 173). Nine 8-line stanzas rhyming *ababbcbC*. R. only, with several lacunae. Mc64, K48, Bw8.

- 1 Beryl, the gemstone the poet associates with Aberdeen, was noted for its clarity and brightness; the eighth foundation of the New Jerusalem in *Apocalypse* (21:20) is entirely formed of beryl, and perhaps a comparison of the two cities is obliquely suggested.
- 1-5 Aberdeen was a royal burgh and an important North Sea port city. This eulogy to a city is not unique. Compare "London, thou art of townes A perse" (sometimes attributed to Dunbar) and Lindsay's *Papyrusgo*, lines 626-46.
- 7-8 Here the poet's praise shifts from the burgh to the queen, who is called the *wall of welth* (line 7), i.e., "the well-spring of prosperity," an image often associated with the Virgin Mary.
- 8 A burgh was a town with a royal charter; it enjoyed special laws and privileges.
- 9-24 The second and third stanzas describe the queen's ceremonial entry to the city and the first pageant presented for her entertainment. This pageant, fittingly, is the biblical story of the angel's salutation to Mary (*Luke* 1:28-38).
- 18 *cop.* Bawcutt suggests "cape; specifically cope, ecclesiastical vestment" (Bw 2.528).
- 25-31 The second pageant depicts the adoration of the Magi (*Matthew* 2:1-12), and the third the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise (*Genesis* 3:23-4).
- 33-40 The queen next views a dramatic enactment depicting more recent Scottish historical figures, beginning with Robert Bruce and followed by figures in the family tree of Scottish kings of the Stewart line, probably ending with a depiction of James IV. This is partly conjectural, however, because the text has a lacuna in line 37.
- 33 *the Bruce:* Robert Bruce "reigned as Robert I (1306-29). His success in the war of Independence was celebrated by Barbour . . . , and he figures as a tenth hero in Scottish treatments of the Nine Worthies theme" (Bw 2.305). He is often viewed as the hero of the great Scottish victory over the English at Bannockburn in 1314.
- 41-48 There is a strongly Celtic flavor to the final entertainment described, in which twenty-four maidens clad in green sing, dance, and play small timbrels before the queen.

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Their garb and the specific number of twenty-four suggests a company of lovely faerie maidens dancing in a meadow, as in The Wife of Bath's Tale (C7 III[D]991-93). In Malory, the queen and her knights are similarly garbed all in green when they go a-maying (Works, p. 649).

- 45 The timbrel was a small percussion instrument (similar to the tambourine) often played by young women; see "timber" in Henry Holland Carter, *A Dictionary of Middle English Musical Terms* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), pp. 500-01.
- 49-56 This stanza depicts the common citizens of the town doing homage to their royal visitor.
- 57-64 Here the emphasis is on the city's generosity toward the queen, bestowing upon her the lavish gift of a large and costly cup filled with gold coins.
- 65-72 The emphasis in these verses is on the poet's expectation (or hope) that the queen will acknowledge the city's generosity with generosity of her own.

**34. To the Queen [Devoid langsyor and leif in lastines]**

This poem is only found in B, where it is anonymous, and thus Dunbar's authorship remains conjectural. But several editors, including Laing and Kinsley, accept this attribution, largely on stylistic grounds. In addition to the uncertainty about the poem's authorship, it also is not certain to whom the poem is addressed. Laing suggested Queen Margaret who, when she was widowed by James' death at Flodden in 1513, was just twenty-four years old. If so, the poem surely would have had to be written before August of 1514, when Margaret married the earl of Angus. Regardless of these uncertainties, the poem is a tender and moving attempt on the part of a poet to comfort a grieving widow. Ross aptly describes it as a "graceful poem of praise, consolation, and proffer of service" (p. 98). Both the stanza form and the number of verses are identical to those used in "To Princess Margaret" (Poem 32). Five 8-line stanzas rhyming ababbabC. B only. Mc91, K49. (Does not appear in Bawcutt's edition.)

- 1-8 In contrast to the rose imagery used to describe Margaret in other poems, here the woman is described as a lily, which might be more appropriate for a woman who is no longer in her teens — and who is no longer so closely associated with her Tudor lineage? — and who is now a widow and perhaps also a queen. Furthermore, Dunbar does associate the lily and fleur-de-lis with Margaret in "The Thistle and the

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 35*

Rose" (Poem 30), lines 138–40. In this stanza, as throughout the poem, there is a heavy use of alliteration.

- 8     *Devoyd langour and leif in lassiness*. Although each stanza ends with the poet urging the woman to be glad and to expel sorrow, the cause of her sorrow is not revealed until line 35 in the final stanza.
- 9–16    *Brycht sterne al morow*. Here the imagery shifts to "the bright star of the morning" and the poet's desire that no dark cloud will hide her face. Compare "A Ballad of Our Lady" (Poem 4), lines 25–28.
- 17–24   This stanza presents a catalogue of the woman's exemplary qualities, including praise for her noble lineage (line 19), which recalls the praise of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York found in "To Princess Margaret" (Poem 31).
- 25–32   Here the poet offers his service to the woman, whose servant he is, and for whom he offers to make songs for her *recomforting* (line 31).
- 35     Finally — and briefly — the poet reveals the cause of the woman's grief; it is fittingly brief, since the poem is not an elegy for the dead but a poignant expression of support for the living.

### **35. Eulogy to Bernard Stewart, Lord of Aubigny [With the glorie and honour]**

Among the most dateable of Dunbar's poems are the two written in praise of Bernard Stewart. The first is a eulogy celebrating Stewart's return to Scotland in May of 1508; the second is an elegy which was probably composed shortly after Stewart's death in June of that same year. Stewart was a famous French knight of Scottish ancestry who achieved international acclaim for his many feats of arms. He led the French contingent that fought in support of Henry Tudor at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485; he also served for a time as French ambassador to Scotland and was thus a familiar figure to the Scottish court. Indeed, he seems to embody personally the close ties between Scotland and France during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Rawcatt describes the poem as "a well-deserved tribute to a great soldier" (1992, p. 82). The poem may seem repetitious, but there is a skillful interweaving of three or four principal motifs, with the later stanzas often elaborating on what had been briefly suggested earlier. Twelve 8-line stanzas rhyming *ababbcbC*, CM and MF, M61, K35, Bw56. CM introduces the poem with the following heading (quoted in Bw 1.177):

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The ballade of ase right noble victorious and myghty lord, Bernard Stewart, lord of Aubigny, erle of Beaumont Rober and Bonafly, consolour and chamberlaine ordinaire to the maist kynge, maist excellent and maist crystyn prince Loys, king of France, knyghe of his ordoure, capitane of the kepyng of his body, conquerour of Naplis and amysable constable general of the same. Complit be Maister Willyam Dunbar at the said lordis comynge to Edinburgh in Scotland vnd in ase ryght excellent embassat fra the said maist crystyn king to our maist souverayne lord and victorious prince, James the ferde kyng of Scottis.

- 1-8      The poem is highly rhetorical throughout; there is frequent use of classical devices such as anaphora, and there is also frequent use of alliteration, as in lines 1 and 3. In part, these elaborate rhetorical devices may strike readers, in Reiss' words, as "too full of hyperbole" (p. 47). If Dunbar's praise of Stewart seems over the top to a modern audience, we would do well to keep in mind Evans' argument that the highly aureate language in the poem serves a formal purpose in signifying responses to the audience and moving them to appreciate Stewart as a man highly worthy of their praise. These reader-response signals, says Evans, are marked both by rhetorical devices and by formal comparisons of Stewart to the Nine Worthies, the optimistic reading of his horoscope (unfortunately, an inaccurate once, since he died the next month), and by the climactic acrostic on his name at the end of the poem. See Evans (1991), pp. 123–24.
- 4      *laureat*. In this case referring to the laurel wreath bestowed upon a military victor; compare Chaucer's Knight's Tale (*CT* II[A]1027). Later in the Renaissance this gives rise to the concept of the poet laureate.
- 5      *Ondo the sterris*. I.e., Stewart is exalted "unto the heavens" or "up to the skies."
- 7      *servator*. The term is used here, as in "To the King" (Poem 46), to refer to members of the court who fulfill official functions. Dunbar considered himself to belong to this group.
- 8      *Withe glorie and honour, knyfe and reverence*. Bw 2.408 notes that the refrain echoes the Palm Sunday processional hymn, *Gloria laus et honor tibi sit* ("glory, praise, and honor be unto you"). Compare Douglas, *The Palis of Honour*, line 1063.
- 13      *moste festi branche of our foyage*. The poet pays tribute to the fact that Bernard Stewart is of Scottish ancestry. (His grandfather was Sir John Stewart of Darnley, who began his French service in 1422 and later became a landholder in France.)

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 35*

Throughout the poem the poet conveys a strong sense that all Scotland embraces Stewart as one of their own.

- 17     *secund Julius*. Julius Caesar, whom the Middle Ages regarded as a great military conqueror and who was included in the famous group of heroes known as the Nine Worthies; two more of them (Hector and Arthur) are mentioned in lines 57–64 when the poet returns to this theme. Compare the reference in Chaucer's *TC* 2.158 to Troilus as "Ector the secound."
- 25–32    This stanza focuses on Stewart's personal kindness to the Scottish people, and may reflect real deeds performed during the time he was the French ambassador to Scotland. Or, it may refer to his concern for the well-being of Scottish merchants abroad.
- 41–48    This stanza reiterates what was already expressed in lines 17–24, in a kind of theme and variation device.
- 49–56    The idea first expressed in line 5 of Stewart's great fame, which ascends to the heavens, is here elaborated. For a discussion of this *topos*, see Curtius, pp. 160–62.
- 59     Fame was commonly portrayed as a swift, winged goddess; compare Chaucer's *TC* 4.659–61.
- 57–64    Just as he had been compared to Julius Caesar in line 17, here Stewart is likened to a group of the world's most worthy warriors and war leaders — Achilles, Hector, King Arthur, Agamemnon, Hannibal, and once again, Julius Caesar.
- 67     *The cristall heime with the lawry suld be crownyt*. Compare line 4, above, and Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* (CT I[A]1027).
- 68     The olive branch is the traditional sign of peace, an emblem used occasionally in emblems. Compare Douglas, *Emblazons* 7.3.15–16, and Whiting O32.
- 73–80    At Stewart's birth, the poet suggests in this presumably imaginary horoscope, several of the planetary deities bestowed upon him their particular virtues — Mars gave him his fierceness, Mercury gave him his eloquence, etc. Kinsley proposes that *Fortuna maior* (line 79) was a group of stars marking out a particular geometric pattern; to be born under that sign would presage good fortune (K, p. 311). Bawcutt disagrees, suggesting instead that *Fortuna maior* is an astrological synonym for

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Jupiter, a planet of positive influence (Bw 2.409). Chaucer used the device of creating a character's horoscope for the Wife of Bath (CT III[D]609–16) and for Hyperinnesus in *LGF* (lines 2576–93). Compare also Lindsay, *Testamere*, lines 64–91.

- 74 *Roreg*. Hawcatt proposes (Bw 2.409) the gloss "reigned"; but perhaps it simply means "rang" or "resounded," for each of the planetary deities in this stanza is making a particular sign or action to bless Stewart's birth. In *The Knight's Tale* the sign Mars gives to Arcite also involves the ringing of his metal hauberk (CT II[A]2431–32).
- 83–87 Using the rhetorical device of *occupatio*, the poet tells us in short what he does not plan to tell us at greater length, Stewart's many military victories. He suggests in lines 86–87 that he intends to do this before Stewart departs again from Scotland; unfortunately, Stewart's death occurred scarcely over a month later.
- 85 *Bertan*. Britain; probably a reference to Stewart's service in command of a French force at Bosworth Field in 1485.
- 89–93 Within these verses the poet creates an acrostic, spelling out in its Latin form Stewart's first name, **BARNARDVS**. Such acrostics were fairly common in eulogistic poetry.
- 94–95 Compare Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* 4.371 and Douglas, *Ecuador* 12.Prol.309–10.

**36. Elegy for Bernard Stewart, Lord of Aubigny [Sen he is gon, the flour of chivalrie]**

Bernard Stewart arrived in Scotland in May of 1508, and within a few weeks he fell ill while traveling from Edinburgh to Sterling. Stewart wrote his will on 8 June and died on 11 June, and Dunbar's short, somber elegy was probably written shortly thereafter. The poem is addressed to Louis XII of France, and probably should be seen primarily as expressing the grief of the entire "Scottis nation" (line 29) rather than Dunbar's own personal grief (Hawcatt, 1992, p. 87). It stands as a companion piece with Dunbar's eulogy to Stewart, with which it shares several phrases and a common stanza form. The catalogues of warriores and victories in the elegy add to the moving injunction of the elegy, which turns loss into what Fradenburg calls an occasion: "The memorializing, the final theatrical manifestation, of a life ideally devoted to the risk of death, to an intentional relation with death. Though Stewart died of illness, his last antagonist, in Dunbar's poem, is the *dragor doloros* [line 178] — a

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 36*

heroization of loss, the obverse of the *grandeur of risk*" (p. 178). The funeral lament became a distinct genre in late medieval poetry, especially on the continent but also in Scotland (see Bw 2.338). As Bawcutt notes, several fine examples "are embedded in larger works; in Henryson's *Orpheus*, 134–81; Harry, Wallace, XIII, 1109–28 . . . and the verse on James I in Bower, *Scoticbrunicon*, XVI.38" (Bw 2.338). Four 8-line stanzas rhyming *ababbcbC*. R only. Mc62, K36, Bw23.

- 1 Bawcutt points out (1992, p. 87) that it was customary in medieval Europe to restrict the use of the epithet *most Cristin king* to the king of France, who at this time was Louis XIII.
- 4 *In deid of armes most anterous and abill.* Compare line 42 in the previous poem.
- 7 *sabill.* Sable is the heraldic term for black, as well as the color traditionally associated with mourning. Compare line 284 in Chaucer's *Complaint of Mars*: "Now have ye cause to clothe yow in sable."
- 8 *the flower of chevelrie.* "The flower of chivalry" was a phrase often used for a knight who represented chivalric perfection; it occurs twice in Chaucer's Knight's Tale (CT II[A]982 and 3059), once to describe Theseus, and once in Theseus' tribute to the slain Arcite.
- 13 *To the Turkas sey all land did his name dreid.* Whereas in the previous poem Stewart's fame reaches up to the stars (line 5), here his reputation as a fearsome warrior reaches across a vast expanse of earthly terrain, all the way to the Turkish sea (i.e., the Black Sea), the point where Asia begins.
- 17 *O dragon dolorous.* Dunbar refers to death as a dragon in several other poems, e.g., "Of Man's Mortality" (Poem 9), line 28.
- 17–24 Evans (1991) sees the poem not just as an elegy, but as a presentation of Stewart's life as an exemplum of the perfect Christian knight and a guide for moral behavior. She agrees with Scott (p. 260) that the "moral conclusion" to the poem may be *vanitas vanitatum omnia vanitas*, as this is a common theme in Dunbar's poetry (p. 125). For example, see "Of the World's Vanity" (Poem 11). While Stewart's life is certainly a model for good behavior, it does not appear to be an example of vanity, only that all things pass. Dunbar is alluding to the common *ubi sunt* theme. Compare "When the turf is thy tour" (MEL, p. 223). Dunbar seems to be comparing

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Stewart's physical prowess to his earthly goods, and, in an interesting twist on *wher*, asks "why?" instead of "where?"

- 20     *The witt of weiris*. I.e., "the wisest of military commanders." Compare *Gofagros and Garwain*, line 1137.
- 24     charbuckell. The carbuncle, or ruby, was a gem that represented great excellence; compare its use in Dunbar's eulogizing Princess/Queen Margaret ("To Princess Margaret" [Poem 31]), line 5.
- 25-32    These verses urge all the poem's hearers to pray for Stewart's soul; such admonitions were common in medieval laments for the dead; the greater the number of prayers on earth that are said for you (this is "intercessioun"), the shorter your time in Purgatory.

**37. To the King [In harsill of this guid New Yeir]**

In this "gay, fresh, hopeful" poem (Scott, p. 135) the poet presents his New Year's greeting to King James IV of Scotland. Although it is very brief, the poem does several things. Primarily, it expresses the speaker's wish that the king receive many blessings — "Joy, gladness, comfort, and solace" (line 2) and "prosperity, fair fortune, and felicity" (lines 9-10). Less obviously, the poem appears to be exhorting the king to pursue a virtuous path both in his private behavior (stanza 2) and in his ruling of Scotland (stanza 4). And finally, in the last stanza it tenders a request for the king to be liberal toward his faithful servers, which by implication includes the poet. It is reasonable, therefore, to consider the poem one of Dunbar's petitions, even though it contains no explicit request. Because its tone is light and cheerful and lacks any hint of cynicism, "To the King [In harsill of this guid New Yeir]" is commonly assumed to be one of Dunbar's earliest petitions, though that is only a guess. R only. Five 4-line stanzas rhyming *aabb*. Mc26, K18, Bw37.

- 4     A *harsill* was a gift given in honor of a special occasion, most frequently around the time of the New Year, and was a token of the giver's good wishes for the receiver. In the poem Dunbar expresses his desire for the king's good fortunes, and the poem itself is the poet's *harsill* to the king. Compare the giving of such gifts in Arthur's court in *SGGK*: "And sythen niche forthe rannen to reche hondeselle, / Yeghed yeres-giftes on high, yelde hern bi hond" (lines 66-67).
- 5     *ane blessed chance*. "A blessed good fortune"; i.e., good luck.

*Exploratory Notes to Poem 38*

- 13–16 Among the king's most important responsibilities are protection of the realm and preservation of justice, duties which are emphasized in "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30), lines 103–12.
- 18 *And send thee many France crownes.* The French crown, or *ecu*, was a gold coin highly valued in Scotland, though worth slightly less than the Scottish pound.
- 19 *hands not swair.* "Hands not ungenerous"; this verse hints at the poet's own desire to receive a generous *hannill* from the king.

**38. To the King [God gif ye war John Thomsounis man]**

Like the previous poem, this petition also begins with the poet's prayer for the king's well-being. But it quickly modulates into something quite different — a comic plea for the poet's receipt of a benefice. The humor in the poem, which Basucatt terms witty and "audacious" (1992, p. 109) and Ridley "rueful whimsy" (1973, p. 1013), stems from the desire expressed in the refrain: "God gif ye war John Thomsounis man." This essentially means, "I wish to God you were more under your wife's thumb." Apparently the poet has found a strong ally in Queen Margaret; but just as apparently, at least for the comic purposes of the poem, the king remains hard-hearted and merciless (lines 29–30) in his attitude toward the poet. The poem would have had to be written between 1503 (the date of the royal marriage) and 1513 (the date of the king's death), perhaps earlier in this period rather than later. Eight 4-line stanzas rhyming *aabb*. MF only. Mc18, K25, Bwt63.

- 1 *Schir.* This is the form of address Dunbar uses for the king in several poems. It is formal and respectful, but by no means flowery, and usually connotes a seriousness of purpose.
- 6 *benefice.* An ecclesiastical office or living by which Dunbar could attain financial security. The poet's desire to receive such a benefice, and the king's reluctance to grant him one, is the central source of conflict throughout most of Dunbar's petition poems. Chaucer's Clerk of Oxenford has not yet attained a benefice, though in contrast to Dunbar he seems to have little interest in doing so (CT II[A]291–2).
- 9–16 These two stanzas (as are two later ones) are filled with compliments to the queen. It may be that he is flattering her in the hope that she will intervene on his behalf, though throughout his poetry one has the sense that Dunbar truly admired Margaret.

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- 14 *fair and gode*. Dunbar also uses the phrase to describe Margaret in line 4 of "To Princess Margaret" (Poem 32) and in the opening verse of "Of the Aforesaid James Dog" (Poem 58).
- 19 *ye had vovit to the swan*. Dunbar is here having fun with the practice of offering a chivalric vow on a noble bird, a practice that is described in many romances and that was sometimes performed in real life. It apparently originates in Jacques de Longuyon's *Voeux du Paon* (c. 1310), in which vows are made upon the peacock.
- 21–23 The *Rose* (line 21) and the *Thirsill* (line 22) are references to Margaret and James. It is not clear whether we should take a verse such as 23 seriously, in which case the poet feels that he has been abused by the king, or whether it is all part of a comic pretense.
- 25 *My advocat, bayth fair and swot*. Perhaps part of the joke, as this verse may suggest, involves a parody of a Christian's prayer to Mary to intercede on his behalf with God.
- 31 *meir Sanct An*. Stories of St. Anne, the Virgin Mary's mother, were greatly revered throughout the Middle Ages. Although no mention of her is made in the New Testament, the Latin apocryphal Protoevangelium of James and, especially, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew provided details of Mary's birth and childhood that sustained many rewritings — the *De Nativitate Mariae*, the Franciscan *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, Mirk's *Festial*, and popular collections of saint's lives such as Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* and Bokenham's *Legendys*. The N-Town Cycle includes a sequence of Mary plays, the first two of which (plays 8 and 9) deal with Joachim and Anne and the marvelous conception of Mary, and her presentation at the Temple. Dunbar might have known the story from Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady*. Hawcutt suggests that Anne's "name was often used in asseverations, as here, to supply a rhyme. Compare Chaucer's Friar's Tale, CT III(D)1613: 'by the sweete Seinte Anne'; and Lindsay, Satyre, 878" (Bw 2.425).

**39. To the King [My pouefull purse so pridly me]**

This wry, clever petition to the king focuses on the poet's financial hardship, hardship that causes him great mental and physical distress due to the lamentable emptiness of his purse. The poem brings to mind "The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse," which also makes a direct appeal to the king for aid; Chaucer's poem, however, does not dwell at such length on the

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 39*

practical consequences of his penury, which is Dunbar's main concern through the first five stanzas of the poem. One of the charms of this petition is its ironic, or upside-down, quality. For example, the speaker begins by cursing silver, but it turns out that he is not cursing silver because silver is a bad thing (which in the medieval Christian frame of reference it probably is), he is cursing silver because it is the very thing he wants but lacks. And later in the poem, he says he wishes he could make a conjuration to put silver in his purse, since that would ward off the devil, who might be attracted to his empty purse (there is an old saying that "the devil dances in an empty purse"). But making magical conjurations would itself involve engaging in a demonic exercise, and a purse full of silver is much more likely to lead to a person's moral downfall than an empty one is, since money is the root of all evil. Seven 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabbA*. B only. Mc1, K19, Bw61.

- 1      *Sanct Salvatour, send silver sorow.* "Holy Savior, accused be silver!" Several Scottish churches were dedicated to Saint Salvatour — a title commonly used for Christ — including the collegiate church at St. Andrews University, which Dunbar may have attended.
- 3      *cheritie.* Probably meant in both senses, i.e., in possession of a loving spirit, and having a desire to be generous to others.
- 4      *sorow.* Probably means "give away," i.e., no longer have.
- 5      *My painfull purse so priclis me.* His purse is painful because it is empty, and that emptiness, like an empty stomach, causes pain. The line may possibly contain sexual innuendo, as some commentators have suggested — i.e., the purse can also mean the scrotum — and there are other lines in the poem that invite similar speculations (e.g., lines 21–22). But such implications, if they are even there, do not seem much in keeping with what the poet is attempting. More interesting is the possibility that he is playing upon the penitential concept of "the mortification of the flesh" in a cleverly inverted fashion. Here pain is being inflicted upon his flesh — not by a hair shirt but by an empty purse!
- 6–7     The languor that prevents him from creating cheerful verse is probably related to the depressed state of mind that he describes at length in several other petition poems. Compare "A Dream" (Poem 42), lines 16–25, the entirety of "The Headache" (Poem 43), and "A Meditation in Winter" (Poem 15), lines 4–10.

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- 16 *in toun.* "In tune," i.e., they clink with the sound of coins. Compare "The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse," line 9, and the "blisful soun" (the clink of coins) that he misses.
- 17 *dysone.* Lit., "breakfast," from OF *désjeuner*; but probably here it means simply "to eat." The word is needed for the rhyme.
- 22-23 *corr.* "Cross," referring to a coin with a cross stamped on one side; in these lines Dunbar is reversing the usual idea that the Cross (or making the sign of the Cross) frightens away the devil.
- 24 *Quhaevir tyne, quhaevir win.* "Whoever loses, whoever wins," i.e., "regardless" or "whatever the case."
- 26-29 A magic purse that is never empty brings to mind various folk tales, as well as stories such as Marie de France's *Larval*, in which the title character's faerie lover gives him just such a purse.
- 33 The *lord* he is addressing is presumably his earthly king, not his heavenly Lord, though a double meaning is possible.
- 33-34 These verses may echo line 25 from "The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse": "And ye, that mowen alle oure harmes amende."
- 34 *maifice.* This word, too, may be meant in at least two senses — "harm" or "evil," but also perhaps "malaise" or "disease." The king is the speaker's physician who can undo his harm and cure his disease.

**40. To the King [Schir, at this feist of benefice]**

This is one of Dunbar's lighter, wittier, and fairly good-humored petition poems, yet there can be no doubt that the poet is serious in his desire to receive what he has been denied, a benefice from which he could derive a proper income. The Scottish king, the "Schir" of lines 1 and 5, had the authority to nominate members of the clergy to a variety of ecclesiastical offices, and the poem clearly reflects the poet's devout wish to receive such a nomination. The poem develops an extended metaphor in which the handing out of benefices is compared to a feast at which the guests should be served equal portions but any not — those who "thirst sorely" are allowed to die of thirst, while those who are already full get fed until they burst. The poem is

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 41*

a plea for fairness. Three 5-line stanzas rhyming *auhba*. MF contains two texts of the poem (MFb is used here), and R (based on MFa). Mc11, K41, Bw62.

- 1 *Schir.* This is the formal mode of address the poet normally uses in his petition poems when addressing James IV.
- 2 *Think that small partis makis gret service.* Proverbial; see Whiting S397.
- 7 The rightness of giving a drink to a thirsty man may also be a biblical allusion: "I was thirsty and you gave me drink" (Matthew 25:35).
- 11 *collusive.* Dunbar is playing on the two meanings of the word: "an evening repast" and "the conferral of a benefice on a clergyman."
- 13 The phrase *playis cop our* suggests a drinking game in which the participants are trying to be the first one to swill the entire contents of the cup. Compare "Master Andro Kennedy's Testament" (Poem 80), line 101. See also Douglas, *Eneados* 1.11.91–92.
- 14 "Let [for] once the cup go around the table" — so that all may sip from it equally. A refrain in drinking songs. Compare Oxford drinking carol, "How, butler, How! / Bevis a towt!" where the refrain, "Fill the boll, jentil butler, and let the cup rowght," apparently refers to just such an appeal for drinking equity. See Greene, *Carols*, p. 254.

#### *41. To the King [Of benefice, sir, at everie feist].*

This petition poem is often paired with the previous one, with which it has a good deal in common. However, it is far more explicit in its condemnation of ecclesiastical greed and the way in which ecclesiastical appointments are made. The poem is twice the length of the preceding poem and is perhaps twice as harsh in tone. Here, though, the poet's criticisms are not directed at the king but at greedy churchmen who grab everything for themselves and still feel that they have not received enough. This is one of Dunbar's petitions that reflects a fairly strong note of self-pity. Six 5-line stanzas rhyming *auhaff*, with varying refrain. MF preserves two versions (MFb is here used), and R. Mc12, K40, Bw43.

- 1 *sir.* Dunbar's usual form of address for the king.

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- 2 I.e., "Those who [already] have the most are the ones who make the most urgent requests [for more]." The word *mostyest* is the superlative form of "many."
- 4 "Ever the refrain of the song is." The word *overword* ("the refrain") literally means the "over word," i.e., the phrase that is repeated over and over.
- 5 The image here is of a gang of thieves dividing their plunder ("parting the pelf") among themselves. Compare Lindsay's *Complaint*, line 198.
- 6-7 Returning to the feast metaphor, the poet says that some eat very fine food (swans), some eat quite respectable food (ducks), and some (like him) eat nothing at all. A fat roasted swan, the food of royalty, since all swans belong to the king, was the favorite food of Chaucer's gluttonous Monk (CT 3[A]206).
- 11-12 Feasts celebrating saints days could be either "common," that is, a day celebrating a general category of saints (e.g., martyrs) or even all the saints (All Hallows); or they could be "proper," that is, a feast day celebrating a particular saint (e.g., 27 December, St. John's Day).
- 13 Dunbar indicates that he sang at such feasts, perhaps fulfilling his professional responsibilities as a cleric; or perhaps he sang as a court entertainer.
- 14-15 The irony of his singing "Charity, for the love of God" — for which he receives nothing — is readily apparent. Compare *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* (Poem 83), line 383.
- 16-20 In this stanza the metaphor shifts to fishing, with the rich ecclesiastics catching all the fish in their nets and leaving nothing for the poor. The metaphor is perhaps an ironic allusion to St. Peter as fisherman after the Resurrection catching so many fish that his nets are full (John 21), whereupon Jesus admonishes him three times to "Feed my lambs."
- 19 *Qwhu nathing hes car nathing gett.* This is probably a proverbial expression (compare Whiting N176 and Tilley N337); and it brings to mind King Lear's famous remark to Cordelia that "Nothing can come of nothing" (King Lear 1.i.85).
- 20 *typhir.* A cipher or zero, which in itself had no value except as a placeholder; thus, such a person is essentially a nonentity.

### *Exploratory Notes to Poem 42*

- 21–25 These verses criticize wealthy churchmen for neglecting the everyday needs of local parish churches. It is possible, as Bawcutt suggests, that Dunbar is referring to the practice of influential cathedrals and abbeys assuming control over smaller churches and then failing to pay attention to their needs (Bw 2.377).
- 28 Dunbar refers to death as a dragon in several poems; compare "Elegy for Bernard Stewart, Lord of Aubigny" (Poem 36), line 17, and "Of Man's Mortality" (Poem 9), line 28.
- 29–30 These sentiments are similar to those found in some of Dunbar's moral poems, e.g., "None May Assurance in This World" (Poem 16), lines 61–64, or "Without Gladness No Treasure Avails" (Poem 19), lines 33–35.

### **42. A Dream**

Perhaps more than any other poem, "A Dream" reflects the wide range of devices and techniques Dunbar employed within his group of petitions poems. Here, in his continued pursuit of ecclesiastical preferment (i.e., the receipt of a benefice), he draws upon the techniques of the medieval dream vision, techniques he uses very effectively in some of his courtly poems and in some of his comic poems. In the case of this poem, however, most commentators do not admire the result. Scott calls the poem "more of a curiosity than an achievement" (p. 154), and Kinsley bluntly declares it "not an artistic success" (K, p. 334); Reiss, on the other hand, calls it "one of Dunbar's most interesting poems" (p. 86). What is especially striking to this commentator is the poem's pervasive tone of cynicism and disillusionment in its depiction of court corruption, and also the poet's use of irony, a device Dunbar employs only occasionally. Twenty-three 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabb*. R only. Mc60, K51, Bw75.

- 1 half sleeping as I lay. Medieval dream visions often begin with the narrator in a state midway between waking and sleeping; compare *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*: "I fel in such a stornbee and swow — / Nosagh al a-slope, ne fulli wakynge" (lines 87–88), *Middle English Debate Poetry*, ed. Conlee, p. 255.
- 2–5 It is common in dream visions in the tradition of RR for the dreamer to discover that the walls of his chamber have been adorned with splendid frescoes. This occurs, for example, in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* (lines 321–34); *HF* (lines 119 ff.); and Lindsay's *Squire Meldrum* (lines 883–84).

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- 11-15 The dreamer is uncertain whether this impressive company has come for friendly or fiendly purposes. There are many instances in medieval and Renaissance literature where visual displays are conjured up for diabolical purposes, e.g., Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* and the ME *Disputatione between a Christian and a Jew* (lines 149-258). Being unsure, the dreamer prays to Jesus and Mary to protect him.
- 16-29 The dreamer's predicament, we discover, is a sickness of spirit reminiscent of what Chaucer's dreamer initially experiences in *The Book of the Duchess*. Because he is beset by the personified figures of Distress, Heaviness (i.e., Depression), and Langour (in line 21), he finds no pleasure in the singing of this company.
- 20 *lay me above*. "Lay above me," i.e., were pressing down upon me.
- 26 *in one trece*. This phrase is usually glossed, "in a processional dance"; but perhaps the meaning is "in a trice" (in an instant), indicating the suddenness of their appearance.
- 26-57 The dancing ladies who attempt to address the dreamer's plight are the sister virtues of Nobleness, Comfort, Pleasance, Perceiving (i.e., Insight), Wit, and Consideration. Their efforts, however, fail.
- 27 *Nobilnes* is a virtue of particular importance to healing the dreamer; the reference is probably to the king.
- 48-59 Discretion suggests that the dreamer's illness stems from melancholy. She then points out that his remedy lies with Nobleness, which is an implied indictment of the court — perhaps of the king in particular — for failing to reward the dreamer according to his deserts.
- 53 The reference to the dreamer's "long service made in vain" suggests that this may be one of Dunbar's later petition poems.
- 55 *this gvid New Yeir*. Distributing New Year's gifts to servants and members of the court was a common practice in the Middle Ages; compare SGGK lines 66-68. Dunbar's "To the King" (Poem 37), thought to be one of his earlier petitions, also reflects this practice. There is a good likelihood that both of these poems are in some sense New Year's poems.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 42*

- 58–60 *Blind Effectioun*. Volunteering to speak on the dreamer's behalf is the personified figure of *Blind Affection* — which might be translated as “*Blind Favoritism*” — a person kindly disposed, who enjoys an important standing at court.
- 60–72 Reason argues that the period of *Blind Affection*'s influence at court is now over, and Reason proposes that the time has come for the dreamer — who has long served the king though he is no flatterer — to receive his proper deserts.
- 62 *sesoun*. See explanatory note to “Discretion in Taking” (Poem 28), line 37.
- 72 *Be Noblessis his help mon first be found*. This verse (like line 50 earlier) once again indicates that the dreamer's care resides with Nobleness.
- 74 The Lords of Session were members of the king's council who were appointed to hear civil complaints. Dunbar refers to them often; compare “The Table of Confession” (Poem 7), line 134; “Discretion in Taking” (Poem 28), line 37; “Tidings from the Session” (Poem 74), line 21; “To the Merchants of Edinburgh” (Poem 75), line 57.
- 76–85 *Inportantie* — meaning something like “persistent importuning” or “constant demanding” — belongs with “*Blind Effectioun*” (line 58) in the ranks of the court sycophants.
- 81–82 These verses indicate that the “*besy askar*” (line 81) is the one who succeeds, while deserving servants who do not ask are ignored — a clear case of squeaky wheels getting the grease. Similar sentiments are expressed in “Discretion in Asking” (Poem 26), especially lines 26–29.
- 83 *And he that askis not tynes bot his wold*. Compare Chaucer's *TC* 5,798 and Whiting 5614.
- 84 “But to waste long service is no joke” — this refers to the two busy servants in line 82 whose service goes unrewarded.
- 86 *Sir John Kirkpostar*. A clergyman with many churches crammed into his pack. Having many ecclesiastical holdings, he stands at the opposite extreme from the dreamer, who can lay claim to no churches at all. Clergymen, especially corrupt ones, were often pejoratively called “Sir John.” Pluralism, the practice of having multiple church holdings, was widely deplored. Dunbar concurs.

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- 90 In using the phrase *yon ballad maker*, Sir John Kirkpakar is heaping scorn on the narrator.
- 91–95 *Sir Bet-the-Kirk*. "Sir Beat-the-Church," or perhaps "Sir Best-the-Church." Although it is not entirely clear who he is, most commentators believe he is a secular figure who has been "besting" the church by snatching up ecclesiastical holdings for his own personal gain. Reason's comments in lines 96–100, though, indicate that this is merely another name for Sir John Kirkpakar.
- 96 *The baillance gois unevin*. The balanced scales being uneven clearly indicate the injustice of the situation.
- 100 *sufficience dwells not bot in Heavyn*. Reason is suggesting, rather pessimistically, that the only satisfaction the dreamer will ever receive will come in Heaven, not in this world — a sentiment expressed in some of Dunbar's moral poems.
- 102 *Him*. "Him" may refer to the dreamer, though it seems more likely that it refers to the king and that lines 102–04 are commenting on the king's capriciousness rather than on the dreamer's dissatisfaction with what has been offered to him — since it appears that nothing has ever been offered to him. If this is the case, line 105 is ironic.
- 106–10 Patience's advice to the dreamer — to "make good cheer and depend on the prince" — seems cold comfort indeed.
- 109–10 In instances where a bishopric was vacant, the income generated by its holdings reverted to the king. But Patience asserts that the king would never intentionally delay the dreamer's preferment in order to reap such benefits for himself, perhaps Patience truly believes this, but the irony is inescapable.
- 111–15 The dreamer's vision is suddenly shattered by the firing of a great gun, which causes the earth to reverberate. Compare the conclusion to Dunbar's *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65). A variety of similar devices occur in other dream poems; compare Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* (lines 1321–25), where the dreamer is awoken by the sound of a bell, and the ME *Parliament of the Three Ages* (lines 656–57), where the dreamer is awoken by the sounding of a bugle.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 43*

- 114 Leith was a port very close to Edinburgh where foreign goods, including guns, were brought into Scotland. Blawcutt observes that a large cannon was fired on Leith sands in July of 1506, in the king's presence (Bw 2,469).

**43. The Headache**

This is one of Dunbar's most personal poems and is a petition only in that it seems to be designed to evoke the sympathetic understanding of the person to whom it is addressed, presumably King James. The narrator's predicament is that he is experiencing an excruciating headache (the "magryme," or migraine, of line 3), and thus composing poetry is completely out of the question. The poem appears to be an apology for his inability to produce a poem, and may be Dunbar's explanation for his failure to fulfill a specific request. A central irony, of course, is that he has written a poem about the inability to write a poem. "The Headache" conveys a strong sense of reality and probably should be accepted as a literal description of a headache. It therefore stands in contrast to several other petitions where the speaker's dilemma is characterized more by psychological or spiritual torpor than by real physical suffering. The final stanza, however, which describes his "curage" (line 12) lying asleep even though he has physically arisen, may suggest that there is also a spiritual component to his distress. Three 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabbh*. R only. Mc3, K21, Bw35.

- 4 *Perceyng my brow as ooy groyie.* The image of an arrow piercing his brow bestows a palpable realness on the description.
- 6 *And now, schir.* Here, as in several of Dunbar's petition poems, the "sir" he is addressing is almost certainly the king. The poem does not make it clear why he is addressing the king, but probably because he has been unable to fulfill a specific request made of him, or a promise made by him. On the other hand, it may be that this is just a clever device for playing on the king's sympathy.
- 8 *sentence.* "The meaning" or "the heart of the matter," rather than the actual words. Compare "Of the Changes of Life" (Poem 13), lines 1-5.
- 9 *Umleipit,* rather than meaning "unasleep" or "awake," literally means "un-slept," i.e., not having slept, or unrefreshed by sleep.
- 12 *curage.* Always a difficult word to translate in ME texts, here it seems to mean "spirit" or "mental faculties."

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- 13-15 All of these things that fail to awaken the speaker's spirit — mirth, minstrelsy, play, din, dancing, and revelry — recall the personified company of entertainers who entered the dreamer's chamber in "A Dream" (Poem 42), lines 7-10, but who likewise failed to provide the narrator with any cheer.

**44. To the King [For to consider is one pane]**

Although this poem clearly belongs among Dunbar's petitions, it blends elements from several lyric categories. Most of the first half of the poem intertwines general observations about worldly mutability with comments deplored the failure of people in authority to reward those who have given long service. Some of the sentiments reflected in these verses are also typically found in satires against the times. But, beginning in line 41, the poem focuses more specifically on ecclesiastical corruption; then, in line 47, we discover the speaker's particular grievance: some men possess seven benefices while he does not possess a single one! In lines 61-75 he compares his long wait for a benefice with that of a merchant who hopes for the safe arrival of a well-laden ship from far-distant lands. Finally, near the end of the poem, he addresses the king directly, beseeching his help (line 90). In the king, he says, lies his only hope help for a lessening of his pain (lines 96-100). This poem does not reflect the powerful sense of disillusionment seen in some of Dunbar's other petitions, but it begins to lean in that direction. Twenty-five 4-line stanzas rhyming *aabb*; this is the *kyrieille*, a form Dunbar employs in about a dozen poems. MF and R. McI3, K39, Bw79.

- 5      *The slydandjoy*. I.e., happiness that does not last — it slip-slides away; compare the phrase "a slyding quhiell" ("a slippery or turning wheel") in line 3 of "Of Life" (Poem 12). Compare also Chaucer's reference to alchemy in The Canonge Yeoman's Tale as the "slidynge science" ("the elusive science"). CT VIII(G)732. The sequence of half line oppositions is tonally akin to the first stanza of *PF*, where "dredfal joye . . . slit so yeme" (line 3).
- 6      *seywyed lou*. "Pretended love"; Dunbar also uses this phrase in line 17 of "True Love" (Poem 68); variant forms of the word *seywyed* occur frequently in his poems.
- 7      *sweit abyld*. Kinsley glosses this phrase as "adroit delay" and Bawcatt as "sweet waiting." I would suggest "pleasurable anticipation."
- 9-12     Similar sentiments occur in some of Dunbar's moralities; compare, for example, lines 41-50 in "None May Assure in This World" (Poem 16).

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 44*

- 10     *faceis tuo*. "Two faces"; hypocritical or deceitful people have long been considered two-faced; compare Whiting F12.
- 16–20   What he is criticizing, he claims, is not unique to Scotland but also occurs in all the major countries of Europe. Perhaps this is a ploy to suggest that the king is not the only one at whom he is pointing a finger.
- 21     This commonplace sentiment is also expressed in several of Dunbar's moral poems, e.g., "All Earthly Joy Returns to Pain" (Poem 8), lines 21–22, and "Of the Changes of Life" (Poem 13), line 17. Compare Whiting W132 and 133.
- 23     *In haff and boar, in burgh and plene*. This verse captures the all-pervasiveness of what the poet is describing — it is simply everywhere.
- 27     People are as changeable as the weather — or the wind and rain. Compare Chaucer's comments in The Clerk's Tale (CT IV[E] 995–98); and Whiting W289 and W295.
- 29     "Good Rule" often pertains to law and order; the border probably refers to the border-country separating England from Scotland, an area notorious for its lawlessness.
- 42–43   A clergyman with an overly broad conscience is one who is far too tolerant of sin. Compare Tilley W888.
- 47     *Sam men hes sevin and I nocht one*. Compare "A Dream" (Poem 42), in which "Schir Johnne Kirkpakar" is said to possess seven churches (lines 86–90).
- 49     *browk one staff*. "Possess a staff" within a cathedral.
- 50–51   A bishopric is not good enough for him; he must be made a cardinal.
- 53     The speaker, considered unworthy, remains among those completely left out.
- 55     "Some play dicing games with a large number (of churches)", the sense seems to be that some men who are rich in church holdings manage them frivolously. As Barwick points out (Bw 2.479), *passage* was the name of a dice game corresponding to French *passe-dix*.

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- 57-83 The *b* in these verses is the benefice or church holding that the speaker so greatly desires.
- 62 Calyecot is Calicut (Calcutta), on the Malabar coast of southwest India; the New Foundl Isle is either Newfoundland (discovered by Cabot in 1497) or another North American locale (i.e., on the other side of the globe).
- 63 The *partis of transmeridianus* may refer to recent discoveries in the southern hemisphere. Literally, *transmeridianus* would mean beyond the meridian, the dividing line in the Atlantic between the Old World and the New World.
- 69 *out of all ayrris*. I.e., "from all points of the compass"; or, "from any direction you can think of."
- 70-71 Some have suggested that *Paris* (line 70) is an error for *Persia*. But more likely *Paris* equated with Europe, *orient partis* (line 70) with Asia, and *The ylis of Aphrycase* (line 71) with Africa, thus implying the threefold geographical division of the world. See Bw 2.450, note to lines 69-71.
- 71 Perhaps the "isles of Africa" are the Canary or Cape Verde Islands, which were well-known by the end of the fifteenth century.
- 78 In 1486 James III issued gold coins with a unicorn stamped on one side; "crowns of weight" would be crowns of the standard weight, not "light crowns."
- 81-82 Apparently provision has definitely been made for the poet to receive what he wants; but it is the interminable wait that he has trouble coping with.
- 83 The reference to the long wait "bursting his brain" brings to mind his migraine headache described in "The Headache" (Poem 43).
- 85-88 His desires, he suggests, are modest. He does not require a great abbey, merely a humble parish church roofed with heather.
- 86 Bawcutt notes that heather was sometimes used to cover the roofs of small country churches but never for wealthy abbeys (Bw 2.480).

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 45*

- 89-91 Since he can never be accused of pluralism (possessing several ecclesiastical holdings at the same time), he suggests, facetiously, that his soul will certainly be better off because of it.
- 93-95 The poet returns once more to sentiments commonly expressed in his poems about earthly mutability. The key image here is of the world being as changeable as an ever-moving weather-vane. Compare Whiting V5 and V6.
- 99 "Your grace" is an honorific title usually assigned to a high-ranking churchman, though here it is clearly directed at the king; perhaps the poet is playing on "grace" to mean "favor" as well as "mercy."

**45. Against the Solicitors at Court**

This poem, which is a petition only by implication, offers an overview of the strategies adopted by those at court who are soliciting royal patronage. Some of them, the poet says, make their case by performing true and diligent service, some by just hanging around, some by providing various kinds of entertainment, some by flirting, flattering, or pretense, and so on. As for the poet, he claims that he knows no other way to conduct himself except with humility; and, as far as he is concerned, the king's gracious countenance offers him riches enough. In Scott's view the poem provides a blatant "example of the guile [Dunbar] disclaims having. Certainly it is a study in, and example of, hypocrisy" (pp. 92-93). Such an appraisal may be harsh, but it is certainly true that in "Against the Solicitors at Court" Dunbar is employing the modesty *topos*, a device that he will move away from in what appear to be his later petitions. Twenty-six verses in octosyllabic couplets. MF contains two versions (MFa is used here), and R. Mc29, K20, Bw5.

- 2 *solicitations*. "Solicitations," here probably more in the sense of "making attempts to gain the royal attention" than in the sense of making formal petitions to the king.
- 3 In this single verse Dunbar briefly mentions those who truly merit the king's recognition; in the next poem, "To the King" (Poem 46), they receive much fuller attention.
- 4 *be continual residence*. I.e., by their constant presence; they are court hangers-on.

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- 5-6 These verses probably mean: "One on his own means survives, / Until fortune does for him provide." A second, though less likely, reading is: "A certain one preserves his own resources / While fortune (i.e., the court) provides for him."
- 7 "The Scottish court records list payments to singers, musicians, and entertainers of many kinds. . . . One singer brought 'a sang bake' for the king . . . [and] several story-tellers are named, such as 'Wallass that tellis the geistis to the king'" (Bw 2.300).
- 8 the Moryis. The Morris-dance; the phrase apparently derives from "Moorish dance," a colorful spectacle involving outlandish music, dancing, and costuming that became a popular entertainment at the Scottish court. There are many references to it in court records, and one was organized by John Damian, the chief subject in "The Antichrist" (Poem 51) and "A Ballad of the Friar of Tungland" (Poem 54) (see Bw 2.301).
- 10 Sam playis the fail and all owt clatteris. This verse may refer to an actual court fool — Dunbar mentions real fools elsewhere, most notably in lines 73–80 of "Master Andro Kennedy's Testament" (Poem 80) — or it may be figurative.
- 11-12 "One man, musing alone by the wall, / Looks like he wants nothing to do with all the rest." This man may be setting himself apart from the others in order to call attention to himself. Or perhaps the poet is referring to himself as an objective observer.
- 13 Whisperers are usually gossipers or backbiters. Compare "Rule of Oneself" (Poem 25), lines 33–34.
- 17-18 Some even turn holy occasions into occasions for self-promotion.
- 19-20 Some shamelessly have their own advocates working on their behalf within the king's inner circle. (In "To the King" [Poem 38], line 25, Dunbar calls the queen his "advocat.")
- 21-26 In these verses the poet calls attention to his own "simpleness" — his innocence, or lack of worldliness, or absence of guile. In contrast to the previous person, who has his own advocate to recommend him, all the poet has to recommend him is his "fumble cheer and face."

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 46*

- 25–26 The king's "gracious countenance" refers literally to his "face," but also to his "regal bearing" or "demeanor." There may also be an oblique biblical allusion in these verses to the light of God's countenance (compare Psalm 4:4–7 in the Vulgate).

#### *46. To the King [Schir, ye have many servitouris]*

This poem is "one of the most subtle and carefully composed of Dunbar's petitions" (Bw 2,450) and a poem that must be considered one of the most artful in the Dunbar canon. As Spearing has observed, "After nearly five hundred years, this poem still has the power to move as well as to entertain" (1985, p. 205). It offers a rich and colorful depiction of various activities that occurred within the larger context of the Scottish royal court. The poem is organized into two major sections that offer lengthy catalogues of two contrasting groups of servitors. The first group (3–24) is composed entirely of true contributors, and all the members of this group have been appropriately rewarded. In the 10-line passage that follows, the poet flirts with the modesty *topos*, though his true feelings soon emerge — he not only believes that he belongs among this first group, he also believes that his poetry will endure as long as the accomplishments of any of them.

The poet then turns his attention to a second group of servitors, a group composed entirely of fakes, leeches, spongers, and flatterers. But what infuriates the poet is the fact that each of these contemptible folk has also been rewarded. Not only does the poet find himself excluded from the ranks of the first group, those who have been deservedly rewarded, but he has also been excluded from the ranks of the second group, those who have been undeservedly rewarded. In essence, he comprises a third category all by himself, that of the deserving but unrewarded person. At this point, in the section that begins at line 61, he can no longer contain his anger; ultimately, he says, either his heart must break, or he must take his pen and get revenge by letting "the venom issue all out" (line 85). In these final verses, the poet's anger seems real and considerable. Eighty-eight lines in iambic couplets. MF only. Mc17, K44, Bw67.

- 1–16 Here the speaker pays tribute to a long list of servitouris (line 1) and officiaris (line 2) who perform valuable, honorable service for the king and who are fully deserving of their rewards and the king's gratitude. They range from highly accomplished lawyers and physicians to more humble craftsmen and artisans. Norman (in McClure and Spiller, 1989) makes the shrewd observation that Dunbar in this passage "castigates the vice and folly of the court only to reveal his own willing complicity with that same corruption. It is as if the poet in playing various roles

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before and within the court exposes the ambiguities inherent in that experience" (p. 190).

- 3 *Kirkmen, courtmen, and craftsmen fyne.* The ordering and grouping of individuals who serve the king has a rough logic, perhaps, moving downward through the social hierarchy, though many of the verses seem to be arranged more for their sounds than for the close connection of the individuals' functions. The group in this line is linked by "k" alliteration and that in line 6 by vowel alliteration; in lines 9 and 12 the alliteration does coincide with a unified grouping, but in lines 11 and 16 that is not the case.
- 5 *Divinoaris* probably means "theologians" (i.e., doctors of divinity), not "practitioners in the art of divination," as has been suggested. Compare the similar word in Chaucer's Knight's Tale: "I nam no divinistre; / Of soules fynde I nat in this registre" (*CT* II[A]2811–12).
- 6 *artistis.* Here it probably means "scholars," men who have completed their study of the liberal arts.
- 7 *Men of armer.* Often called "men at arms," these are professional soldiers of lower social status than the knights they accompany.
- 8 The "many other goodly wights" probably refers to the lesser foot soldiers who would have accompanied the knights and men at arms of line 7, perhaps men such as Chaucer's Yeoman, who accompanied and served the Knight and the Squire.
- 9 There is a wealth of evidence, both from within Dunbar's poems and elsewhere, to show that James' court was greatly enlivened by musical entertainment.
- 10 *Chevalosris, cowandaris, and flingaris.* Since the poet has already mentioned valiant knights and other military figures, perhaps these terms refer to varieties of entertainers; the meaning of *cownadari*s is obscure, but *flingari*s normally means "dancers." Bawcutt suggests it may have a military sense: "burlers of missiles" (Bw 2,451).
- 11 *Caryouris.* "Coiners"; the king's mint was known as the *caryelhouse*. In this context, *caryouri*s probably are "wood carvers."

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 46*

- 12–14 *Beillaris of barkis . . . schipwrightir.* In the early years of the sixteenth century James IV embarked on an extensive, costly program of shipbuilding; its finest product was a ship called the *Great Michael*. Completed in 1511, the *Great Michael* carried a crew of 300, along with 120 gunners and a thousand men of war. The phrase *barkis and ballingaris* (line 12) refers to sea-going ships of all varieties. Compare Douglas, *Eneadis* 4.7.72.
- 13 *Masounis fynd upon the land.* This line alludes to James' massive program of castle building and rebuilding.
- 16 *Pryntours.* If this term actually means "printers" rather than something like "stampers" or "impressors," then this line offers evidence for dating the poem, since the first printing press in Scotland was established in 1507 by Chepman and Myllar, whose first book actually appeared in April 1508. The poem, then, would have had to be written after this date.
- 25–34 The speaker's attitude toward his plight is initially stated with becoming modesty (lines 25–27); but then he reveals his belief (lines 28–32) that his works are just as perfect as any performed by the people previously mentioned; and by the end of this passage, his bitterness is undisguised. In the following section (lines 35–60), as the speaker presents a huge catalogue of "Aneuthir sort" (line 37) — the king's underserving servitors who have also been rewarded — his bitterness intensifies. On the highly ornate, rhetorical idiom of Dunbar's court poetry here and in the two long lists of court functionaries see Norman (in McClure and Spiller, 1989), pp. 179–80: "The key to understanding Dunbar as 'makar' lies in his role as court poet. He is the only one of the important fifteenth-century Scots poets who was directly and solely dependent on the patronage of the court for his livelihood" (pp. 179–80).
- 28–33 Here Dunbar expresses the classical view, much reiterated in Renaissance poetry, that art has the power to endure despite the ravages of time.
- 39–49 Many of the terms in this catalogue of underserving servers are both highly colloquial and terribly insulting, and many of them are recorded nowhere else, making it difficult to be certain of their meanings. But one thing is certain — everyone included in this list is either a self-serving parasite or a hanger-on of one variety or another.
- 41 *gannaris.* Perhaps these "ganners" are included among the "leeches" because of the great expense that gannery practice required, or perhaps because most of them were

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foreigners, like the figures mentioned in lines 42-43, "James IV's interest in artillery and fire arms is well known" (Bw 2.451).

- 42 *Monsieuris*. He is probably using this French title sarcastically. The fact that they are experts in fine wines — good clarets — suggests their gluttony and drunkenness. Delicacy, the second daughter of Gluttony, according to John Gower, is a particular vice of nobles who "reconcile their taste for gluttony to all delights so that they can live delicately." In particular Gower describes Delicacy's wine cellar, which includes "vintage, malmsey, spiced claret" and "fouuring wine" (John Gower, *Mirour de l'Omme*, trans. William Burton Wilson [East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1992], p. 108).
- 42-43 As these lines suggest, at James' court there were many foreigners (here French and Irish), something the poet seems to resent greatly.
- 44 *lyk out of mynd*. "As if out of their minds."
- 46 *hall hantaris*. Hanters who do their "hunting" in the dining hall, not in the fields.
- 48 *and kennir na man of gude*. "And who know no good of any man," i.e., have nothing good to say of anyone.
- 54-60 These verses reflect James' keen interest in alchemy and Dunbar's aversion to it, a topic also treated in Dunbar's poems on John Damian ("The Antichrist" [Poem 51] and "A Ballad of the Friar of Tungland" [Poem 54]).
- 60 In a Scottish burgh the Tolbooth served as a meeting place for the town council, as the seat of the burgh court, as a center for financial administration, as a prison or town jail, or simply as a place of security; see DOST. In some instances it even served as a school. In Edinburgh, the Tolbooth was on the High Street near St. Giles church.
- 65-66 These lines contain an allusion to the popular poem *Cofelthie Sow*, in which a gathering of fools feast upon a little pig called a *gryse*.
- 73 *penance*. "Penance"; but perhaps the sense of the line is that he would feel more "forgiving" or "tolerant" had he too been rewarded.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 47*

- 76 The poet's melancholy, mentioned here and again in line 84, is caused, according to medieval humor theory, by an excess of black bile. One remedy for it would be "to vent his spleen." His melancholy is also mentioned in line 49 of "A Dream" (Poem 42). Compare Pertelote's comments on "malencolie" in Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale (CT VII[B]2933-37).
- 82-88 In these verses, the poet seems to be casting himself in the role of the ancient Celtic bard, or satirist, whose words had the power to destroy the reputation of the person at whom they were directed.
- 87 The *tryuckill*, the sweet medicine that can calm his heart, is of course the better treatment he wishes to receive from the king. Compare the Host's use of the word in Chaucer's Prologue to The Pardoner's Tale (CT VI[C]314).

### **47. To the King [Complaine I wald]**

"To the King [Complaine I wald]" has much in common with "To the King [Schrif, ye have moray servitouris]" (Poem 46), and, like the previous poem, it appears to be one of Dunbar's angriest petitions — at least on the face of it. But here the poet's sense of outrage and his use of vituperative language has become so extreme and exaggerated that the poem moves beyond the realm of serious satire and into the realm of comic invective, the realm of the *flying*. Commentators have been especially intrigued by the colorful, and in some instances very obscure, set of abusive epithets the poet uses in his catalogue of rascals (lines 15-27). Ridley plausibly suggests that many of these terms may have been "neologisms, coined for the sake of verbal attack and highly suited for it because of the harsh, contemptuous effect they create even when their literal meaning is unknown — if it ever existed" (1973, p. 1014).

Following the catalogue of rogues are brief descriptions of three varieties of ecclesiastical abuses (lines 28-39) practiced by these scoundrels. There then follows a scathing portrait of a low-born cleric who lords it over members of the aristocracy (including the speaker, presumably) and who does all he can to see that they "never rise to his renown" (line 66). As Ross observes, this cleric's "crooked body betrays his crooked nature" (p. 144). Some critics have been incensed by the anti-egalitarian attitude Dunbar expresses in this poem, but others have defended him as being a man of his time who simply reflects the viewpoint of the class to which he was born. In any case, in the final ten lines the poet once again voices his plea to the king to "have an eye toward your old servant, who has long relied on you" (lines 69-70), verses perhaps suggesting that this is one of Dunbar's later petitions. Seventy-six verses in octosyllabic couplets. MF and R. Mc19, K45, Bw9.

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- 1-8 The gentle, benign, almost devotional tone of the poem's opening verses is surely meant to provide a stark contrast with the stream of invective that soon follows.
- 6 The epithet "Queen of Heaven" is commonly used for the Virgin Mary. Compare "A Ballad of Our Lady" (Poem 4), lines 6, 38, and 61.
- 7-14 One of the king's most important responsibilities was to insure that justice was had by all. Dunbar refers to this fact elsewhere, especially in lines 106-26 of "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30). Compare also "To the King" (Poem 37), line 15.
- 10-11 The nobles and men of virtue mentioned in these verses are people who have been slighted. They stand in contrast, in their virtue and in their unrewardedness, to the men listed in the ensuing catalogue.
- 15-27 Now the poet's string of abusive phrases pours forth — almost as a fulfillment of the poet's prediction in lines 85-86 of the previous poem, so that what we see here is an example of the poet "spouting" his venom. The precise meanings of some of these phrases are uncertain, but on the whole the passage reviles rustics and men at court who come from rural backgrounds, i.e., men of low birth and little cultural sophistication.
- 18 *huschbaldis, haggerbaldis . . . hammeffis*. Bewcett observes: "Obscure, but DOST (s.v. *huschbald*) notes the existence of a group of abusive words, employing the pejorative suffix *-bald*, and suggests their connection with verbs, such as *husch*, *hag*, *husk*, meaning 'strike, cut down.' */H/ummeffis*. Perhaps cattle. In later Scottish the word was used of polled domestic animals" (2.307n18).
- 28-38 The three varieties of unworthy clerics described in these verses are found among the same men just described; now we are given further elaboration of the vices they practice.
- 28-32 Some of the men just described snatch for themselves a cowl — that is, they wear a monk's habit — and soon they are in charge of a great convent, that is, they have risen to the position of abbot. (It is possible that one such figure is John Damian, the abbot of Tungland and the subject of two of Dunbar's most scathing poems, "The Antichrist" (Poem 51) and "A Ballad of the Friar of Tungland" (Poem 54).)

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 47*

- 33-34 Some beg from the king a *rokkar* (line 33), i.e., a rochet (the white vestment of a bishop), which destroys a worthless person, i.e., which thus converts a nobody into a somebody.
- 35-38 Some who receive just an ordinary parsonage think it a gift that is greatly beneath them — a gift fit only for a page boy; they cannot be content until they have received the title of "my lord" — an honorific title used for prelates as well as for nobles.
- 39-40 "But whether he is content or not / Judge for yourself in your own mind." The answer, clearly, is that he is not content, not even when he has achieved the title of "my lord."
- 41-48 In these verses the poet expresses his outrage at the plight of impoverished young noblemen who are reduced to accepting castoff clothing and running errands for their far less worthy and capable "superiors."
- 45 *mister*. Here the term probably means a gentleman, a man of noble birth, rather than a university graduate.
- 47-48 "And has much more intelligence — by three times — to possess such a dignified office."
- 51-52 "Seated at table so far above the place / suitable for one who formerly mucked out the stable." The seats at a meal or banquet were assigned according to social rank. Compare *SGGK*, lines 72-73.
- 54-60 Now the poet additionally portrays his depraved clergyman as being physically grotesque, perhaps in the tradition of Chaucer's Summoner, or perhaps as a kind of male counterpart to the "loathly lady" of medieval romance. It is possible that the "pack" mentioned in line 58 does not refer to an actual pack but to the hump of a hunchbacked clergyman.
- 59 The term *glaschase* is obscure. Bowcott suggests *glaschase gaw* may mean something like "fish face" (Bw 2.308). My suggestion is that *glaschase* may mean "glowing" or "glassy" — indicating that his face has become shiny from excessive food and drink; Chaucer's portrait of the Monk comes to mind: "His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas, / And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt" (CT II[A]198-99).

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- 62 strumbell. A plodding farm horse (?); it is probably related to "strummellis" in line 17.
- 67 *O prince maist honorable.* The prince is King James, to whom he is making his petition; the phrase also recalls the "wardlie prince" he had mentioned in line 7.
- 69 *And to thy awld servandis haffe.* This verse recalls line 38 in "Discretion in Giving" (Poem 27): "And to awld servandis list not se."
- 73 The reference to his "writing" may refer to his poetry, or it may refer to other kinds of secretarial services he has performed as a clerk in the king's household.
- 74-76 With the terms *daegar* (line 74) and *grace* (line 75), the poet is playing on the relationship of a lady and her suitor; the lady long displays her *daegar* (her disdain or standoffishness) before finally taking pity on the lover and bestowing upon him her *grace*.

**48. To the King [Ecces of thocht doit me mischeif]**

This petition poem has a good deal in common with the next poem, "To the King [That I suld be ane Yowillis yald]," especially in what it suggests about the poet's advancing years and in its comparison of the poet to an animal — in this case a bird, in that case a horse. It also offers suggestions (yet again) about Dunbar's attitude toward rustics and foreigners who have benefitted from the king's generosity (while he has not), and it may also offer important insights into the poet's relationship with the king. As Ridley observes, "The poem is interesting for what it suggests about Dunbar's early and lasting ecclesiastical ambitions, his attitudes toward low-born men, and his relations with James IV, which were either so intimate or so misguided that he felt he could reprove the King in most outspoken terms" (1973, p. 1015). Scott suggests that one of "the freshest things in the poem is the [poet's] honest self-analysis, self-revelation, and confession of state of mind" (p. 118). The bird metaphor, which is only sustained through the first six stanzas of the poem, draws upon heraldic imagery, animal fable tradition, and on specific works such as Chaucer's *Parlement of Fowls* and Dunbar's own "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30). Dunbar surely selected the bird metaphor with James' passion for falconry in mind. Seventeen 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabff*. MF, B, and R (which only preserves a fragment of the text). Mc20, K42, Bw68.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 48*

- 4     *Gud conscience*. It is the king's "good conscience" of course, not the speaker's, which should be crying out for the poet to be rewarded; and it is to the king's conscience that he is making his appeal.
- 5     *Excys of thoscht ddis me mischeif*. This refrain line is similar in sentiment to the refrain in "To the King" (Poem 44); "For to considerre is ase pane." Both reflect the pain the speaker feels when he thinks about these things — something he cannot help doing.
- 6     *clarkis*. Probably minor scribes, not clergymen.
- 7-9    "And I, like a red hawk, do cry out / To come to the lure (but) I do not have permission, / Even though my feathers have begun to molt." Why like a *red hawk*? No one is sure. Kinsley wonders whether Dunbar may have had red hair (K, p. 319). If that is so, perhaps the reference to his beginning to molt implies that he has also begun to grow bald. In the next poem, he indicates that his hair has turned white (lines 21-22).
- 11    *falconis kynd*. "The falcon's race," i.e., noble birds (as opposed to lesser ones).
- 12    *mystell*. This unidentified term seems to refer to a specific variety of lesser bird of prey; but perhaps it simply means "middle," referring generically to birds of middle rank, birds that would stand in contrast to truly noble high-ranking birds.
- 13-14   *hard by mynd*. I.e., "firmly remembered"; that is, not forgotten or neglected, as the poet is.
- 16-19   The kite (*gleid*, line 13) was considered a rapacious and cowardly bird that fed, ignobly, on carrion; the goshawk, though a relatively low-ranking falcon, was still a genuinely noble bird. In Chaucer's *PF* the goshawk is the first of the "egles of a lowere kynde" (line 332).
- 16-19   The magpie imitates the songs of other birds; but when it tries to mimic the song of the nightingale, it cannot begin to reproduce the actual song of the nightingale. Here the magpie symbolizes a plagiarizing or derivative poet, in contrast to a true artist, the nightingale. Perhaps Dunbar means to contrast himself with lesser poets at court. In "A Complaint against Mure" (Poem 60) he lodges a complaint against a man named Mure for stealing his verses.

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- 21 *Ay fairest feddiris her farrest foulis.* The earliest recorded example of a well-known proverb (Whiting F573).
- 21-23 It was often fashionable in late medieval courts to have exotic species of birds on public display; these verses, though, are clearly alluding to the favoritism shown to foreigners in James' court.
- 24 *Kynd native nestis.* These "natural, native nests" (of owls!) stand in sharp contrast to the silver cages of the exotic birds mentioned in the previous verse.
- 26 The *gentil egill* is of course the king; the eagle, a traditional symbol of kingship, is one of the three symbols Dunbar uses for the king in "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30).
- 28-29 These verses contain one of Dunbar's most direct and audacious rebukes of the king.
- 31 *Kyne of.* I.e., "The likes of"; Rauf Colyard and Johnne the Reif represent commoners who have been elevated to noble status. Both names may be drawn from tales in which this occurs (compare *Ralph the Collier*, in *Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances*, ed. Alan Lupack [Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1990], pp. 161-204).
- 36 Perhaps there is a play on words in *maid refuse* ("refused" or "turned down"), with the secondary meaning being "made into refuse," i.e., "treated like garbage."
- 38 This proverb (Whiting A37) usually occurs when the speaker is pleading for social equality; the irony here is that it is the person of high birth (Dunbar) who is pleading for equality with the commoner who has been elevated above him.
- 41-65 Autobiographical writing was not yet common in European writing. In England, Hoccleve, following tendencies in Chaucer (such passages as the Prologue to the *LW*), had shown the way. These lines are among the most personal and self-revelatory verses in all of Dunbar's poetry.
- 48-49 "Alas, all I am able to do is write poems — such childishness controls my bridle's reins." This is, of course, mock humility; Dunbar has no doubts about the value of writing poetry.

*Exploratory Notes to Poem 48*

- 54 For the figure of the king as the poet's physician, compare "To the King" (Poem 39), line 34, and "A Dream" (Poem 42), lines 49–50.
- 58–59 Here Dunbar makes a direct request for a benefice, which contrasts greatly with the indirect appeals he normally makes in his petitions.
- 61–64 The poet here reminisces about his early childhood. He says that as he was dandled on his nurse's knee she sang to him *dandillie, bishop, dandillie* (line 62). The implication is that from an early age it was expected of Dunbar that he would have a brilliant career in the church. But now that he is old, he has not even managed to become a simple vicar, a minor churchman who oversaw a parish church whose rector was non-resident.
- 66–75 These stanzas once again express the poet's sense of injury and injustice, that country rustics have come into possession of the things he wants but continues to lack.
- 66 *Jock*. Jock is a stock name for a man belonging to the lower class — a rustic.
- 68–69 Having a false card up your sleeve usually refers to cheating at cards; but here it may mean that not only does Jock openly possess far more than the poet, even the card he has tucked away has greater value than all the poet's poems.
- 71 *uplandis Michell* is similar to Jock, but perhaps the distinction between them is largely geographical — Jock being a Lowlander of low birth, while Michell comes from the Highlands.
- 72 *With dispensation in one knitchell*. Papal dispensations were often required in order for a churchman to hold several benefices at the same time.
- 74 *He playis with totum and I with rychell*. The reference here may be to a game involving a four-sided spinning toy; when the top stops spinning, the side resting on the ground will either show a T (for *totum*=all), or an N (for *nihil*=nothing).
- 78–79 Dunbar's sardonic wit is mischievously evident in his apophatic "excess of thought" (line 80): "I'm not saying this, sir, to criticize you, / But I very nearly am."

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- 81–82 The comparison of himself to a soul in Purgatory awaiting God's assistance recalls the image of the interminable wait for his ship to arrive that Dunbar employs in "To the King" (Poem 44), lines 61–75.

**49. To the King [That I suld be are Towillir yuld]**

In this poem Dunbar makes a specific but fairly modest request, asking the king for a new suit of clothes so that he may be suitably attired for Christmas. And judging from the *Repositio Regis* in lines 69–76, as well as from other external evidence (see *T.6* iii, 181, 361), in this instance Dunbar's request was granted. In the metaphorical conceit that runs throughout the main body of the poem, the poet depicts himself as an old, exhausted workhorse relegated to the roughest pastures and considered unfit to be stabled next to "great court horses" such as palfreys (line 46) and coursers (line 64). As Bawcutt aptly observes, "The poem is striking for its balance of pathos and self-mockery, witty wordplay, and imaginative parallels between the hierarchies of men and horses" (Bw 2.447). The use of the "old horse" metaphor, along with the references to the horse's white mane (lines 21, 70, and 72), suggests that the poem is a late work. The poem has the form of a carol, the two-verse burden with which it begins providing the refrain for each stanza. The main body of the poem consists of eleven 6-line stanzas rhyming *aabbff*; that is followed by the *Repositio Regis*, a single 8-line stanza in rhymed couplets. The text here printed combines the MF fragment with the text in R, following Kinsley's reconstruction, K43, Bw66. Not included in Mc.

- 1       *in toane*. I.e., "in public"; the speaker wants to avoid public humiliation.
- 2       *Towillir yuld*. *Yuld* was a colloquial term for an old, worn-out horse, a "holiday" horse put out to pasture; apparently the term had come to be used to describe someone not properly dressed for the occasion, in this case the Yuletide. The word *yuld* is related to the English word *jade* (see line 3), which also means a broken-down horse of little value, i.e., a nag.
- 3–6      These lines suggest that if he had been a worn-out workhorse from the wilds of the north, he would have been treated well — i.e., "housed and stalled" — revealing Dunbar's irritation at the king's beneficence toward Highlanders.
- 5        *Strenover*. Stranaver, located in northern Sutherland, is probably used to suggest a very remote and rugged place.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 49*

- 6      *bosurir*. Probably refers to the horse-cover placed over the horse's back rather than to the building containing the stables. That would make sense in the context of Dunbar's request for a suit of clothing. Compare its similar use in line 65.
- 9      *as ye know*. The phrase indicates the king's familiarity with Dunbar and his situation.
- 12     *To fong the fog*. The phrase probably refers to his having to feed on the rough, rank winter grass, although it may also suggest having nothing to feed on but damp air.
- 16     *On pastouris that ar plane and peid*. Bawcutt suggests that *pastouris* may refer to "the part of the horse's foot between the fetlock and the hoof" (Bw 2.448), in which case *peid* would mean "bare of hair or flesh."
- 17–18    Now that he is old and "long in the tooth," he says, he should be called in from his cold, bare pasture. These verses may attest to Dunbar's advancing years, or they may just be part of a fiction he is creating.
- 22     *ye haff all the wyt*. I.e., "as you know full well," once more indicating that the king is personally acquainted with the speaker's situation.
- 30     *evill schond straw*. The adjective *schond* in the phrase is obscure, but the sense of the whole line is clear: "For the wretched straw that I would be given to eat."
- 36     *With agly gemes to be gnawin*. Lit., "by ugly gums to be gnawed," if the word *gemes* means "gums"; perhaps this may be a figurative description of how cobblers would "chew on" the horse's hide.
- 41     See Douglas, *Eneyados* 7.4.191–94 "for a description of richly embroidered horse-trappings" (Bw 2.449).
- 45     *Now Ifferis crommis with larges loral*. This line describes the ceremonial gift-giving of the holiday season, perhaps offering a real-life parallel to what is described fictionally in SGAK, lines 66–70. Bawcutt suggests that *Ifferis* does not mean "lovers" but rather "liveries" (Bw 2.449), and that is quite possible.
- 47–48    This reference to mares that are ridden by both nobles and commoners may contain a humorous allusion to the king's sexual indiscretions.

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- 53–54 These are intriguing verses. Do they suggest that in his younger days Dunbar had opportunities elsewhere (possibly abroad?) that he passed up in order to remain in the king's service?
- 64 "Coursers" are powerful war-horses — steeds or chargers. Compare CT II(A)2501.
- 65 *houc*. A cloth covering for a horse. See explanatory note to lines 3–6.
- 69–76 *Responsio Regis*. Scholars and critics disagree about whether these final lines were actually composed by the king. The relatively simple language and the basic couplet form of the "king's response" — which contrasts with the more sophisticated stanza form of what has preceded it — may be evidence that this truly is the king's response to Dunbar's petition. On the other hand, Dunbar might have written this response in such a way as to suggest that it is really the king's own work. Such effrontery might well have been part of the joke.
- 69 Among the duties of the king's treasurer was providing liveries for petitioners such as the speaker. The Lord Treasurer is also the person that the poet joyfully addresses in "To the Lord Treasurer" (Poem 52).
- 72 The term *jurt*, which means "silvery-gray," is commonly used to describe the color of horses, but was sometimes used to describe men's hair or beards.
- 74 Apparently it was common for high-ranking churchmen such as bishops to ride on mules, very often mules that were lavishly adorned. Compare Lindsay, *Papynge*, lines 1050–52.

**50. Of People Hard to Please**

"Of People Hard to Please" is both a satiric poem and a moral poem (it bears an especially close relationship to "Of Covetise" [Poem 22]), but it is also one of Dunbar's most subtle petitions to the king. The central tactic here involves contrasting his own lack of wealth with the grasping of others who already enjoy great abundance; his own pride, though, prevents him from crying out for the largess he believes he deserves. This is the humility *topos* that also appears in poems such as "Against the Solicitors at Court" (Poem 45) and "To the King" (Poem 49). The four manner of men who "are evil to please" (who are never satisfied) are general types — rich men who want more riches; powerful landholders who want more land and power; men who seek sexual gratification outside of their marriages; and gluttons who can

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 50*

never get their fill of wine or ale. It is possible, however, that each of these men who are hard to please actually represents just a single man — the one man Dunbar finds it especially "hard to please" — King James IV. Barbed jokes directed at the king occur in several of Dunbar's petitions, and perhaps the king enjoyed hearing them as much as Dunbar enjoyed making them. Bawcutt suggests that the structure of the poem may be modeled upon Proverbs 30:15–16 (Bw 2.316). The poem is attributed to Dunbar only in R, but most of the editors and commentators accept his authorship. R and B (two versions, both defective). Seven 4-line stanzas rhyming *aabb*, and a concluding couplet. Mc23, K83, Bw 12.

- 1–4 This stanza depicts the man of great wealth who desires still more.
- 4 *And wold have part fra utheris by.* The refrain line underscores this man's greedy desire to take some of what others have; in regard to the poet, the suggestion seems to be that the covetousness of men such as this is what keeps him from receiving his due.
- 5–8 In these verses the man who is not satisfied is a powerful landholder; he has a hard time managing what he already has, and yet he wants to have more.
- 7 *That he may neither reid nor gy.* This verse may mean that this man is so mighty and powerful "That he may be neither ruled nor controlled" — he considers himself above the law. But it is more likely that it refers to his inability to rule or control the lands he already possesses.
- 9–12 This stanza is quite clear in its literal meaning. But given James' reputation for extramarital dalliances, and given the similarity of the phrases used to describe the nobleman's wife with those used elsewhere by Dunbar to describe Queen Margaret, it is likely that the king is one of the targets of the satire — perhaps the chief target.
- 17–20 This stanza provides a summation of the previous stanzas and also a transition into the more personal stanzas that follow.
- 22 The phrase *to concloif* often "signals the approaching end of a poem" (Bw 2.317). Compare Heneysen, *Fables*, lines 394, 611, and 2970.
- 24 Here the meaning of the refrain is cleverly reversed. Now the flow of goods is not *from* the others nearby, but rather *from* the poet *to* the others nearby, who are presumably the very ones who in the previous stanzas were taking from the others nearby.

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- 25–26 The poet's suggestion that he has been overlooked by "Sir Gold" in the handing out of gifts at Christmas brings to mind his plea in "To the King" (Poem 49) that he not be overlooked and that he be given clothing suitable for the occasion. "Sir Gold" may simply be a flippant way of alluding to the king; but perhaps there was actually a figure called Sir Gold who distributed the gifts to members of the court during a lavish public ceremony. Bewcett suggests that the "personification is modelled on 'Sir Penny' . . . who often figures in medieval satiric verse" (Bw 2.317).
- 27 Bewcett glosses *larges* here and in line 29 as "ceremonial distribution of gifts" (Bw 2.563). See explanatory note to lines 25–26.
- 29–30 The repetition of these verses is probably for the purpose of driving home his point with a final rhetorical flourish. It may also suggest that the poem was intended to be sung.

**51. *The Antichrist***

This poem is one of a pair of Dunbar poems that ridicule a particular figure at the court of James IV — John Durian — a man who seems to represent almost everything the poet finds objectionable about the court. Durian was apparently a flamboyant figure (he did such things as organize Morris dancing) and a great favorite of the king, who not only appointed him to the position of abbot of Tongland (in Kirkcudbrightshire) but who also gave substantial financial support to his alchemical experiments. Durian was one of the many foreign courtiers (he was probably French or Italian) that Dunbar seems to have despised. But the most important thing about him in regard to Dunbar's poetry is his ill-fated attempt to fly from the battlements at Stirling Castle, an action that may have resulted in a broken leg (if, in fact, it actually happened).

The poem may be grouped with Dunbar's petitions because of the references in Dame Fortune's speech (lines 21 ff.) to the fact that the poet will never have a calm spirit or receive a benefice until an abbot dresses himself in eagle's feathers and flies up among the cranes. Since such a thing is unlikely ever to happen, it is equally unlikely that the poet will ever receive a benefice — a fine example of the medieval *topos of impossibilitas*. The joke, however, is that an abbot will be foolhardy enough to try to fly, a fact in which the poet finds great comfort. Several of Dunbar's petitions satirize court figures who depended upon the king's generosity, and those poems may also contain thinly-veiled references to John Durian.

Also notable in this poem is its burlesque of prophetic and apocalyptic writings of the later Middle Ages, popular writings that were often attributed to figures such as Merlin or the "Scottish Merlin," Thomas of Erceldoun. The description of the griffin and the dragon

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 51*

copulating in mid-air and giving birth to the Antichrist (lines 26–30) parodies the kind of intentionally bizarre and obscure mumbo-jumbo found in such works. Ten 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabb*. MF, B, and R. Mc39, K53, Bw29.

- 1       *Lucina* is another name for Diana, the moon goddess.
- 4–5      The poet's heaviness of thought, as subsequent verses make clear, stems from his general lack of good fortune and his specific lack of a benefice.
- 10       Both Kinsley and Bewcett have seen in the word *fontanic* "a hint that the dream may be delusive" (Bw 2.352); perhaps, though, it is meant to suggest that the dream will be filled with wondrous and fantastical occurrences.
- 11       Dame Fortune, the goddess *Fortuna*, is the traditional medieval emblem of worldly instability and uncertainty, symbolized by her ever-turning wheel. The poet's earlier complaints against her (lines 6–7) have provoked her anger against him, which is reflected in her *frenmit cheir*, the angry look on her face. For depictions of Fortune in Scottish literature, compare Barbour's *Bruce* 13.635–70 and *The Kingis Quair*, lines 1110–55.
- 13–14     These verses contain Dame Fortune's stern admonition to the poet to leave her alone and let her do her work.
- 16–18     These verses offer a traditional description of what happens to those who are placed upon Fortune's wheel.
- 19–20     Fortune tells the poet that the signs she is about to describe signify that his troubles are nearly over.
- 23–25     These verses obliquely allude to the episode in which John Damian attempted to fly from the walls of Sterling Castle. The poet will go on to suggest, in his satiric attack upon Damian, that he is the father of the Antichrist.
- 26       Like the cockatrice and basilisk, the griffin was a fabulous composite creature. It had the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle. According to bestiary lore, it was a vicious creature that would destroy any human it met, and it was sometimes believed to be the incarnation of Satan.

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- 27–30 The “she-dragon” with which the griffin copulates in mid-air — thus begetting the Antichrist — is perhaps suggested by the Dragon mentioned in *Apocalypse* (12: 3–17 and 20:2–3). On diablerie in Dunbar see headnote to “The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins” (Poem 77) and Bawcutt (1989), p. 165.
- 29 The Antichrist is the false prophet who will appear just before the Second Coming of Christ and who will attempt to lead believers astray. Although there are few scriptural references to such a figure (compare 1 John 2:18 and 4:3; and 2 John 7), it is often suggested that the second of the two beasts described in the thirteenth chapter of *Apocalypse* — the so-called Lamb-Beast — represents the Antichrist. In some medieval accounts of the birth of Merlin it is suggested that he was fathered by a demon in an attempt to place a satanic agent in the world who would function as a kind of Antichrist.
- 31 Saturn’s *regnum* is the seventh sphere, the outermost sphere of the planets or “erratic stars.” It is more often described as cold or frosty, not fiery, though Dunbar is right in associating Saturn with wondrous and often malevolent happenings, as Chaucer also does in *The Knight’s Tale* (CT II[A]2443–69). Compare Henryson’s *Orpheus*, line 191, and Lindsay’s *Dreme*, line 378.
- 32 Simon Magus, mentioned in Acts 8:9–24, is an emblem of ecclesiastical greed (the sin of simony is named for him); but in the Middle Ages he was commonly portrayed as a sorcerer and as a man who attempted to fly up to Heaven but who failed.
- Mahosor in medieval texts is usually a reference to a devil worshiped as a false god, not a reference to the Islamic prophet Muhammad. In *Patience* (based upon the book of Jonah) he is one of the false gods the sailors pray to during the terrible storm at sea (lines 165–68).
- 33 *Merleye at the mune*. Merlin’s father, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s account of Merlin’s birth, is one of the incubus demons that inhabit the airy spaces between the earth and the moon.
- 34 “Janet the Widow” is probably just a generic name for a witch.
- 36 Smoke and fire, or fire and brimstone, are often associated with devils and with the apocalypse. Compare *Apocalypse* 9:18–19.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 52*

- 37-38 In *Apocalypse* 20:7-10, Satan and his supporters have a brief period of earthly triumph before being vanquished and cast into a lake of fire and brimstone forever.
- 39-40 Dame Fortune suddenly departs, leaving the dreamer completely frustrated in his desire to appease her.
- 41-43 The poet is too embarrassed by his ludicrous dream to even mention it to anybody until, incredibly, Dame Fortune's prophecy begins to come true.
- 49 Normally seeing two moons in the sky would be a portent of impending disaster; for the poet, ironically, it is an omen of good fortune, for now the impossible has actually happened.

### *52. To the Lord Treasurer [Welcome, my awis lord thenaurair]*

This poem seems to indicate that the poet's desperate need of money has finally been satisfied. Indeed, line 25 seems to indicate that his long-sought-after benefice may have been obtained. Bawcutt suggests, however, that although the "tone sounds exultant, an underlying anxiety is present" (Bw 2.337). While the poem cannot be dated precisely, it was probably written after August 26, 1510, when Durbar's annual pension was increased substantially. The lord treasurer, whom the poet so-enthusiastically welcomes, was the official chiefly responsible for collecting and administrating Crown revenues. Eight 4-line stanzas rhyming *aabR*. R only. Mc24, K47, Bw22.

- 5 *rink*, "Men of rank" or "knights"; the word is borrowed from the specialized vocabulary of alliterative poetry; its more common spelling in ME alliterative poems such as *SGGK* and *Winer and Waster is rink*.
- 9-12 This stanza describes the promise the treasurer had made to him. The following stanza expresses the speaker's delight when this promise has been fulfilled.
- 17-20 This stanza reveals the anxiety and trepidation the poet was feeling until the promise had been kept. As Bawcutt notes, "delays in disbursements were common at most medieval courts, and it was often necessary to put pressure on the authorities, to speed up payment" (Bw 2.337).

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- 18-19 "Before you came in the most direct way / From the town of Stirling to the courts  
of justice [in Edinburgh]." Apparently he is impressed and delighted at the  
treasurer's speedy journey, which has resulted in the timely paying of his pension.
- 19 *the air*: The justice ayres, or circuit courts, which were held in the spring and the fall  
of the year.
- 21-22 Pensions were paid in the spring at Whitsuntide (late May or early June, usually)  
and in the fall at Mariemas, November 11. If his fall payment had been delayed, he  
might have had to go until Christmas without it.
- 30-31 The poet addresses the lord treasurer as his "own dear master" and speaks humbly  
of himself as the lord treasurer's "man" and *servant singulair* (his "devoted  
servant," line 31).

**53. To the Lord of Chalker**

The lords of Chalker that the poet is fictitiously addressing are the lord auditors of the exchequer; they were responsible for making an annual audit of royal expenditures, which usually occurred during the summer between June and August. Although Dunbar's pension would not have come within their purview, he is having fun with the idea of having been called before them to make a formal reckoning — for he finds himself hard pressed to explain where all his funds have disappeared to! Ridley notes the poem's "combination of slight pomposity, down-to-earth urgency, and humor at the poet's own expense" (p. 1017). Four 5-line stanzas rhyming *abbba*. R only. Mc25, K46, Bw36.

- 4 *corce nor cuytie*. Lit., "cross nor cuigne"; these terms refer to two kinds of coins,  
with the *corce* probably being of greater value than the *cuytie*. The St. Andrew's  
cross was imprinted on one side of some Scottish coins.
- 6 *For reckyning of my rents and roomes*. The income he had received from rents and  
properties would be the auditors' major concern.
- 7 *tyre your thambs*. To "tire one's thumbs" means to go to the trouble to do  
something; but in this case they do not need to.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 54*

- 8-10 They do not need to make their counters clink (referring to the metal disks used for counting), or need to waste paper or ink, in calculating his totals — since what he has left is zero.

#### *54. A Ballad of the Friar of Tungland*

This is the second Dunbar poem to satirize John Damian, the foreign-born physician and alchemist who was the abbot of Tungland (in Kirkcudbrightshire) from 1504 to 1509. But whereas "The Antichrist" (Poem 51) only briefly alludes to Damian's attempt to fly from the walls of Sterling Castle, here this ignominious event receives more than sixty lines of detailed description. And whereas "The Antichrist" appears to be primarily a lighthearted attempt to carry favor with the king, this poem seems designed to heap abuse upon a man for whom Dunbar must have felt great contempt.

In this dream vision, the poet first presents us with an outline — probably for the most part fictitious — of Damian's earlier life. In the lengthy opening stanza the poet characterizes Damian — whom he calls a "Turk of Tartary, a son of Satan's seed" (lines 4-5) — as a man who has continually managed to remain one step ahead of the law. Having had to flee from Europe, Damian turns up in Scotland where he continues to perform his nefarious deeds. In the next two stanzas Dunbar describes Damian's fraudulent medical practices, showing him to be not only a charlatan but also a murderer. In the second half of the poem, after Damian's alchemical experiments have proved failures, the poet focuses on Damian's final desperate act, his ill-fated attempt to fly from the battlements of Sterling Castle. In this section of the poem Dunbar presents an extended catalogue of the birds that viciously attack the airborne abbot (lines 69-118). And in the final phases of this description, the poet introduces a strong scatological element; for as this unnatural aviator becomes terrified by the birds' relentless attack, he defecates all over himself (lines 101-04). The poem is written in tail-rhyme stanzas rhyming *aabcccb*; the *b* verses are in trimeter, the others in tetrameter; and the *b* rhyme is often carried over from one stanza to the next. B and As. Mc38, K54, Bw4.

- 1 Dream-vision poems are often set at dawn; that is also the case in Dunbar's "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30), following the long-established tradition of the *RR*. What is puzzling about this verse, though, is the phrase *cristall halie*. Perhaps as Bawcutt suggests, *halie* means "dew-drops" rather than "hail," or it might mean "salutation" (Bw 2.297). But since Aurora's visage is appearing in the sky, perhaps "halo," or "glow" makes better sense for Aurora's aura in this context.
- 4 *sons of Sathanis soid*. The reference is to beings such as Merlin, or perhaps the Antichrist, beings who were sired by incubus demons. In this case, of course, it

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refers to John Damian. On diablerie in Dunbar see headnote to "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins" (Poem 77), below.

- 5      *Tark of Tarkary*. Here Dunbar gives Damian an exotic and pagan origin.
- 7      *dry forloppis in Lambardy*. The implication is that he is a fugitive from his native land.
- 11     albeit new. The phrase refers to the dress (i.e., the habit) of a religious order; thus because he can read and write (line 12), Damian is able to pretend that he belongs to an ecclesiastical order.
- 17     *To be a leiche he fonyt him thair*. After having fled from Lombardy, Damian now pretends to be a medical man. Perhaps he had learned something of medical science at the university in Bologna, which at the time was a leading center for medical studies in Europe.
- 21     His ability to "skillfully slit throats" is meant sardonically.
- 23–24    Once again, Damian turns fugitive to avoid receiving his just deserts.
- 27     *it was no play*. I.e., it had serious consequences.
- 31     *The Jew*. Literally "the Jew," though here probably with the more general meaning of "the infidel" or "the unbeliever" — which is not to deny that the phrase contains an anti-Semitic slur. Blawcutt sees possible influence "by legends of the Wandering Jew . . . and of evil Jewish alchemists and doctors; one, Zedekiah, was credited with the power of flight and reassembling disembodied corpses" (Bw 2.298).
- 32     Monstrous creatures being the offspring of giants reflects the common medieval interpretation of Genesis 6:1–5 and Isaías 14:9. Compare *Crying of one Play*, line 29, and Henryson's *Bludy Serk*, lines 25–32.
- 46     *suddene deid*. "Sudden death" was greatly feared by medieval Christians, who did not want to die unconfessed and unshriven; compare Henryson's *Fables*, lines 775–76.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 54*

- 49–50 Damian, the poet suggests, disdained the most holy observances; the *sacring bell* (line 50) would have been rung at the holiest moment in the mass, when the Eucharist was consecrated.
- 53–56 The abbey at Tungland, where Damian served as abbot, belonged to the order of Premonstratensian canons. Dunbar is playing on the two meanings of *clausor* in lines 53 and 54; and perhaps in using this term there is a sidelong glance in the direction of Chaucer's Canon's Yeoman's Tale, which concerns fraudulent and disreputable alchemists.
- 54 For an abbot not to attend the service of matins would be a serious breach of canon law.
- 55 He never donned ecclesiastical vestments such as the stole, which was worn around the priest's neck and shoulders, or the *maniple*, a strip of silk attached to the priest's wrist.
- 58 The quintessence, or fifth element, is here equated with the elixir or "touchstone," the material alchemists needed to create or discover in order to transmute base metals into precious ones. (Technically, the quintessence is "ether," the element in which all the heavens beyond the sphere of the moon are bathed; it is the fifth essence because it is an element other than earth, air, fire, and water.)
- 64–68 The birds are dumbfounded by this strange airborne creature: could he be Daedalus or the Minotaur or Vulcan or — the best guess of all — Saturn's cook? Daedalus is the famous craftsman of classical myth whose skillfully crafted wings led to the ill-fated flight of his son Icarus. The Minotaur was the monstrous half-man, half-bull creature on the isle of Crete; he was not a flier, but Icarus escaped from his Labyrinth by flying. Vulcan, the blacksmith to the gods (not just to Mars), is perhaps a candidate because Damian's besmirched clothing and blackened face give him the sluttish appearance of a blacksmith. Saturn's cook might have a similarly disreputable appearance (Saturn's sphere is the seventh sphere, the outermost sphere of the erratic stars.)
- 69 At this point the birds begin their attack. It might be suggested that Dunbar is anticipating film director Alfred Hitchcock by about five hundred years. A significant difference, however, is that in Hitchcock's film the birds' attack is presented as an aberration of nature, whereas here it is the winged figure of Damian

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that is the aberration of nature. The birds' attack provides him with the final comeuppance he so richly deserves.

- 73 Neither the *myttane* nor the *Sanct Martynis feole* have been positively identified. The former is thought to be a term for a lesser bird of prey; the latter may be the martin, so called because it begins its yearly migration around the time of Martinmas (11 November); other suggested identifications include the hen-harrier and the mergus, a diving, fish-eating bird. Basnett provides an intriguing explanation for this last possibility (Bw 2.299).
- 73–76 Dunbar is alluding to "the mobbing of the owl," when a large group of lesser birds gather together and harass the hated owl; this practice is also alluded to in the ME debate poem *The Owl and the Nightingale* (lines 1658–69).
- 77–105 Alliteration is used freely throughout the poem, but it is especially heavy between these lines.
- 83 *The pyor furth his peniss did rag.* "The magpie tugged at his feathers." It is possible, though, that *peniss* also carries a suggestion of "penis," which would be in keeping with the reference in line 86 to his "bawis" ("balls"). The poet's intention, in any case, is humiliation.
- 89 *This was the chaf of kayis and cravis.* Compare Holland's *Howlat*, line 191.
- 97–98 Compare Holland's *Howlat*, line 61, and Chaucer's *PF*, line 346.
- 103 "He made a hundred cows all streaked." Dunbar is playing on the term *bawkit*, which was used to describe cattle with spongy or streaky hides. Here they are "streaked" because of Damian's massive loosing of excrement.
- 105–08 Damian slips out of his coat of feathers, falls, and lands in a bog, sinking up to his eyeballs.
- 113–24 Damian remains submerged in the mire (*or the plange*, line 113) while the circling, squawking birds continue to search for him. *At the plange*, in falconry, describes a technique of evasion used by diving birds.
- 115 How crows got their *crys of cair*, their voices of woe, is the subject of Chaucer's Manciple's Tale. Compare also *PF*, line 363.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 55*

- 125-26 Employing a device found in many vision poems (e.g., the concluding stanzas of *PF*), the poet is suddenly awakened from his vision by a loud noise, which in this case is the yammering and clamoring of the birds.

#### *§5. Sir Thomas Nomy*

Dunbar's satiric exposé of Sir Thomas Nomy, which is modeled on Chaucer's Sir Thopas, is a poem of mock praise for a court figure who, though he may not have actually been a court jester, seems to have made a great fool of himself at court. (A real court fool named Curry is mentioned in the poem, along with the suggestion that Nomy has earned the right to be Curry's knave, his helper or tutee.) The comic effect in this poem, as in Sir Thopas, largely results from the incongruous juxtaposing of the chivalric with the unchivalric. Throughout the poem Nomy's great feats of chivalry are celebrated, and yet the joke insinuated in the refrains of several stanzas is that he alone knows the truth about his allegedly glorious deeds. Scholars disagree about what Nomy's actual status and position at court was, but it seems likely that he was a court braggart in the tradition of the *aviles gloriosas*. Six-line stanzas rhyming *aabccb*, with the *b* verses in trimeter, the others in tetrameter — this is the basic stanza form of Chaucer's Tale of Sir Thopas. MF and R. Mc35, K27, Bw39.

- 1 Now lythis. This appeal for silence is the standard "minstrel-call" seen in the opening verse of Sir Thopas and in numerous popular romances and ballads.
- 4-6 These verses attest to the hero's noble lineage (compare Sir Thopas, CT VIII[B']718-23). In Nomy's case, his parents are no less than a giant and a fairy queen. That he was begotten by sorcery recalls the conception of King Arthur, aided by the magic of Merlin.
- 12 Ross and Moray, located in the far north of Scotland, are probably meant to ironically suggest the "exotic" lands in which romance heroes perform their deeds of derring-do as they are bleak and remote. It may be, though, that Nomy actually took part in some military excursions in those areas.
- 14 The phrase "Highland ghost" suggests the elusiveness of the Highlanders, whose ability to quickly disappear when pursued in their misty northern glens was legendary. Dunbar might also be taken to mean that the deeds of Nomy are themselves phantom-like; they cannot be proved and border on being mere fantasy.

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- 16 The Clan Chattan was a large and warlike group of the north that were allied together; one of the leading groups within this confederation of clans were the MacIntoshs. "It had a fierce, warlike reputation, and in 1430 murdered 'nearly the whole membership of Clan Cameron.' . . . Dunbar possibly recalls the clan's recent activities, such as a raid on Cromarty and Inverness in 1490, and the 1502 revolt . . . which threatened royal estates in Moray" (Bw 2.371).
- 17 As Baswell points out, "Normy turns the tables on the Highlanders, who were notorious as cattle-thieves" (Bw 2.371).
- 18 This is the first instance in which the poet hints that all these claims of heroic deeds might actually be lies.
- 19-21 His prowess at dancing must have really been something (we are told with a wink), since the Highlanders were renowned for their great skills at dancing. Perhaps part of the joke here, though, has to do with the uncouthness — from Dunbar's point of view — of the Highland fling.
- 22-23 Whether or not his Highland dancing is an ignoble activity, his wrestling clearly is, since wrestling was a lower-class sport more appropriate for someone such as Chaucer's Miller. Compare Sir Thopas, *CT VII[B<sup>2</sup>]740*.
- 25-30 These verses compare Normy to several heroes well-known from ballads and popular romances, including Robin Hood and Guy of Gisburn from the Robin Hood ballads. Roger of Clekniskleuch has never been identified, but Allan Bell is probably a mistake for Adam Bell, the hero of Child Ballad 116; or perhaps Allan Bell is a conflation of the names Alan Adale and Adam Bell. The sons of Simon of Whinfell have not been positively identified either, though the phrase occurs in line 381 of *Colleibie Sow*, where it appears to be the title of a song. Archery, like wrestling, was not usually considered a chivalric activity, except for Sir Thopas, *CT VII [B<sup>2</sup>]739*, where Chaucer mocks the knight.
- 35 Bevis of Hampton was the hero of a popular medieval romance; it is one of the specific works that Chaucer burlesques in Sir Thopas, *CT VIII[B<sup>2</sup>]899*.
- 37 The Quintin whose opinion the poet facetiously derides (facetiously, since he actually concurs with it), might be the man who serves as Kennedy's second in the *Flying* (Poem 83), lines 2 and 34, though that is only a guess. It is also possible that

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 56*

he may be the poet named Quintyne Scham who is mentioned in "The Lament for the Makars" (Poem 14), line 86.

- 38 The meaning of *pibm* (adj.) is obscure. Perhaps it is related to the archaic American expression found in a sentence such as the following: "Sheriff, that man is *pibm loco!*" — meaning he is "completely insane."
- 43–48 Curry was a fool who is mentioned several times in court records between 1495 and 1506. He was apparently a fool "by nature" who had to have an attendant to look after him. See *T&E* 2.529, 3.465.
- 46–48 I.e., "To this extent I dare to praise him: / He never once in his life befouled his saddle, / Whereas Curry befouled his twice" — some praise indeed!
- 49–50 Easter and Yale were two of the times during the year when great courtly festivities occurred. On these occasions, the poet suggests, Norny deserves to be treated as the king of fools, not just as a mere attendant to one.
- 54 Small bells were worn hanging down from the fool's costume. They are all that is needed to show Norny for the fool that he is.

### *56. A Dance in the Queen's Chamber [A merrear dance mycht na man see]*

This lighthearted, comic poem, which was possibly written for the queen's amusement, reflects the poet in one of his happiest moods, as he "burlesques the balletic abilities of the court" (Fradenburg, p. 174). He is both an observer of and a participant in the dance scene he describes, a scene in which members of the queen's retinue successively demonstrate their talents in tripping the light fantastic. There is a coarse element in some of the descriptions that is reminiscent of *fahikaw*, but there is also a degree of tenderness and warm affection toward the elegant Mistress Musgrave, one of the queen's chief attendants. Dunbar's own dancing is frenzied and filled with sexual innuendo. Kinsley suggests that the awkward meter in several lines (e.g., 4, 10, 16–17) is intended to reflect the awkwardness of the dancers (K, p. 302), as they improvise talent where none exists. See Annette Jang in McClure and Spiller, pp. 221–43, on the Morris Dance trope here, and in "Against the Solicitors at Court" (Poem 45) and "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins" (Poem 77), as well as other Scots poems like *Pebhlir to the Play* and *Cheyaris Kirk on the Grene*. Jang includes several drawings of Morris dancing at court or before ladies. Seven 7-line stanzas rhyming *aabbcc*. MF and R. Mc32, K28, Bw70.

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- 1-7 The first dancer is Sir John Sinclair, a well-known courtier during the reign of James IV. Because he is recently returned from France, the seat of high fashion, one would expect him to set a high standard for the dancers to follow. But he is so inept that someone rudely shouts out, "Take him away!"
- 8-14 The second dancer, Master Robert Shaw, is probably the court physician who had studied for several years at the University of Paris. He looks the part of a dancer, initially, but he too proves to be as clumsy as a hobbled cart-horse.
- 13 "From Sterling to Strathnaver" means "from one end of Scotland to the other."
- 15 The master almoner was responsible for distributing gifts to the poor. Throughout the reign of James IV the king's chief almoner was Sir Andrew McBrek; but he may not be the dancer in the third stanza, since the queen also had an almoner.
- 16 *Aomuleye-jomuleye*. The phrase seems to be an inverted reduplicating phrase, meaning something like "higgledy-piggledy" or "topsy-turvy."
- 18-20 These verses contain the first of the several vulgar jokes in the poem. There are many references in contemporary records to John Bete the Fool; one of them refers to him as "John of Bute," perhaps indicating his place of origin.
- 22-28 These verses depict Dunbar the Makar's dancing as bold and daring and almost frenzied, and they tell us that the dancer's performance has been inspired by his love of Mistress Musgrave. The *alryce almoste* in line 24 is apparently a specific kind of dance or dance step, though it has not been identified. However, the reference in line 60 of "In a Secret Place" (Poem 72) to the "dery dan" (there clearly referring to the act of sex) may offer a helpful suggestion. The word *palle* in line 25 is a crude colloquial term for the male sex organ.
- 29-35 Putting all the other would-be dancers to shame is Mistress Musgrave, whose dancing is stylish and elegant. This woman, who is the object of the poet's admiration, is probably Agnes Musgrave, the wife of Sir John Musgrave, an important member of the queen's English entourage. There are many references to her in the account books, recording the gifts and clothing she often received. "Mistress" is a polite form of address for a married woman.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 57*

- 36–42     *Dame Dounteboir* (line 36) is probably a disparaging epithet rather than a surname, but those for whom the poem was intended would surely have known who the poet had in mind. Her dancing is treated more derisively than that of any of the others.
- 43–49     The "queen's dog," the figure depicted in this final stanza, is James Dog, the queen's wardrobe official who is the subject of the next two poems. Throughout this sequence of poems Dunbar puns on his name. He is referred to twice in these poems as a mastiff, which may indicate that he was a man of huge size.
- 47         Compare "Of James Dog" (Poem 57), line 17, where James Dog is also called a mastiff.
- 48         *He stackett lyk a tyk, cum saed.* Compare Whiting H592.

### **57. Of James Dog [Madame, ye heff a dangerous dog]**

This poem and the one that follows focus on the figure of James Dog, an officer of the queen's wardrobe who was the final member of her retinue to be described in the previous poem. There the poet ridiculed the man's dancing, and here he exposes the man's vicious, suspicious, and stingy nature; in the next poem, however, the poet completely recants — though it seems clear that his tongue is firmly in his cheek. While we cannot be certain that the previous poem was specifically addressed to the queen, in the case of this pair of poems concerning James Dog we can be. James Dog had been a groom in the king's wardrobe before passing into the service of the queen, where he became responsible for overseeing such things as the furnishings and tapestries in the queen's chamber, as well as the distribution of gifts and liveries to the members of her retinue. Records show that he continued in her service until 1527. The poet's canine imagery that runs through both poems sustains an obvious play on the man's name. Six 4-line stanzas rhyming *aabb*, *Mf* and *R*, *Mc33*, *K29*, *Bw72*.

- 1         "Venus' bower" is obviously meant as a compliment to the queen.
- 2–3         These lines attest to James Dog's tightfistedness; the doublet which he refuses to give the poet is presumably the bone of contention here (so to speak). Because a doublet only reaches to the waist, it would cost much less than a long frock reaching all the way to a person's foot. *Frog* was the Scottish form of "frock." It was expansive enough to be worn over armor. Compare Barbour's Bruce 10.380–81.

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- 4 Perhaps there is a play on the two meanings of dangerous — dangerous in the sense of being "a danger to others" and in the sense of being "hard to please" (i.e., stingy).
- 6-7 These verses contain the first of the canine images in the poem — here the image is of a barking dog that is "worrying" a hog.
- 17 The mastiff was frequently used as a guard dog; it is a large and unattractive dog, attributes the poet probably means to assign to James Dog. He is also called "mastiff-like" in "A Dance in the Queen's Chamber" (Poem 56), line 47.
- 19 Gog Magog became a traditional name for a fearsome pagan giant; this is probably not an allusion to the biblical figures Gog and Magog, or to the giant mentioned early in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* (Thorpe, pp. 72-73). Bawcutt (Bw 2.464) cites Hay's *King Alexander*, where there is a strange oriental giant descended from Gog Magog found in a list of *zowdanis*, lines 6049-67.
- 21-23 James Dog is so huge that when he walks the queen's whole chamber shakes; yes, he is much too large to be a lapdog!
- 23 Bawcutt compares *Crying of one Play*, lines 37-38: "Gog Magog / ay quhen he dancit the warld wald schog" (Bw 2.464).

**58. Of the Aforesaid James Dog [He is no dog, he is a lamb]**

Here the poet retracts — or appears to retract — the unflattering portrayal of James Dog offered in the previous poem. "He is no dog," he claims in the refrain to each stanza, "but a lamb." Perhaps the reason for this sudden about-face is that the queen was not amused by the previous poem. Or perhaps the poet received the doublet he had been seeking and so is now (facetiously) making amends. Or perhaps the joke here is more along the lines of the Manciple's remarks in the link into The Manciple's Tale in *The Canterbury Tales*, where the Manciple, after making a vicious verbal assault on the Cook, tries to make amends and claim that he was only kidding. In any case, it seems unlikely that the poet's opinion of James Dog has undergone a radical transformation. Six 4-line stanzas rhyming *aabR*. MF and R. Mc34, K30, Bw73.

- 1 The "gracious Princess" is Queen Margaret. Compare "To Princess Margaret" (Poem 32), line 4.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 59*

- 3      *maist/friend*. Usually glossed as "most friendly," but possibly meaning "best friend" or "closest chum."
- 4      The vicious, dangerous dog of the previous poem is now said to be "as gentle as a lamb." That is a remarkable transformation and one that should make us suspicious of the poet's true intentions. Interestingly, Kinsley points out that there actually was a man at court named James Lam (K, p. 304), and so perhaps the poet is playing on the names of Mr. Dog and Mr. Lam, and perhaps on their contrastive personalities as well.
- 5-6     Compare the Manciple's remarks: "I wol nat wratthen hym, also moest I thryve! / That that I spak, I seyde it in my boarde" (CT IX[H]80-81).
- 9-11    Bawcutt suggests that "These lines sneeringly imply that Dog is performing tasks more fitted for a woman" (Bw 2.464).
- 13-20   This pair of stanzas concerning James Dog's relationship to his wife are highly insulting — they suggest that she physically abuses him and that she has made him a cuckold.
- 18      *syd and back*. This is an inclusive formula, meaning "all over."
- 19      *barrow trum*. One of the poles or handles used to carry a hand-barrow. Bawcutt notes that in *Christis Kirk*, lines 193-94, peasants used them as weapons (Bw 2.464).
- 21-22   These verses indicate that James Dog has complied with the poet's wish to receive a doublet, a desire that had been suggested in line 2 of the previous poem. But perhaps he did so only at the queen's insistence.

**59. Epitaph for Donald Oure**

Bawcutt points out that the subject of this poem is probably Donald Owyr (or Donald Dubh — in Gaelic meaning "Donald the Black"), a member of the Macdonalds, who as Lords of the Isles had maintained their virtual independence from Scotland until the reign of James IV (Bw 2.348-49). After the forfeiture of the Lordship of the Isles in 1493, Donald Owyr was held at court in the king's service. But he managed to escape in 1501, and he later led a major uprising of the western clans — including the Macdonalds, Camerons, MacLeans, and MacLeods —

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against Scotland in 1503. Donald was eventually captured and imprisoned in Stirling Castle. He was not executed, however, as Dunbar appears to be urging in the poem. Indeed, he lived many more years and led yet another revolt against the crown in 1545. Although not all scholars accept this identification (e.g., Ross, p. 183), the Highlander being reviled in this poem must have been a man of considerable prominence and Donald Owyr, who is specifically named in line 19, is the most likely candidate. For a fuller account of the Lordship of the Isles, see Jean Munro, "The Lordship of the Isles," in *The Middle Ages in the Highlands*, ed. Loraine Maclean (Inverness: Inverness Field Club, 1981), pp. 23–37. Kinsley points out that the form Dunbar uses for this poem is associated with satire (K, p. 309). Eight 6-line stanzas rhyming *aabbba* (a variant of the tail-rhyme stanza). BD, MF, and R. Mc36, K34, Bw27.

- 1-6 Bawcutt calls attention to the repeated use of sibilant sounds in these verses (Bw 2.349). Clearly there is an association between Oure and a hissing serpent.
- 7-8 In the Middle Ages the owl was often viewed not only as an especially ugly creature but also as an unnatural one, for of all the birds it was the only one to "foul its own nest" (compare the ME *The Owl and the Nightingale*, lines 625–58). Also, in one of the fables in the popular fourteenth-century work *Dialogus Creaturarum Moralium*, the owl leads an unsuccessful rebellion against the eagle, resulting in its banishment.
- 11-12 The figure of a dissembling fiend lurking in a monk's habit and eating alongside the brothers in the monastery *frater* is quite striking; perhaps anti-clerical satire is intended.
- 13-16 Compare the proverb cited near the end of Chaucer's Reeve's Tale: "A gybour shal hymself bigyled be" (CT II[A]4321); compare also Whiting T444 and G491, and Psalm 7:16 in the Vulgate.
- 19-24 The meaning of this stanza seems to be that Donald Owyr, by far the worst of the rebels, has been spared, though he must watch the executions of his lesser allies. Dunbar is apparently incensed at the fact that the chief culprit has been pardoned. Bw 2.350 offers the paraphrase: "Donald Owyr has more falsehood than any four of his supporters from around the isles and seas, [who] now grimace on high upon gibbets."
- 22 This is a problematic verse. Kinsley glosses *rappieris* as "punishment, torture," but Bawcutt argues for "allies, armed supporters" (Bw 2.350).

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 60*

- 24 *Naw he dois glowir.* The sense appears to be "Naw he glowers" from the gallow tree (line 23). Though possibly "he" could mean "high," as in "A Ballad of the Friar of Tungland" (Poem 54), line 62.
- 31–48 Just as Dunbar had compared this villain earlier to the foulness of the owl, now he compares Owyr at even greater length to another beast well-known from animal fable tradition, the cunning, deceitful, thieving fox. In the *Fables* Henryson says that the fox, by nature, is "seyycit, craftie and cawetous" (line 402). See Bw 2.350.
- 32 *reffar, theiff, and traitour.* "An inclusive phrase for malefactors; cf. the excommunication of 'common traitouris reyffaris theyffis' in the *St Andrews Forumulare*, I, 268" (Bw 2.350).
- 45–46 Apparently it is in the nature of wemen who are spinning at the distaff to engage in rude or scornful speech; compare the lyric tradition of the *chanson de mal mariée*.
- 47–48 See Whiting F592. The sense of this proverb is that a fox will always behave like a fox — it is the nature of the beast. Compare Henryson's witty "ay nannis the fose, als lang as he feete has," *Fables*, line 827.

**60. A Complaint against Mure**

Here the poet requests the king to redress an injury inflicted upon his poetry by a man named Mure, presumably a rival poet. Mure has not been identified, and once again it is difficult to know if he was a real person, if the poem reflects a real or an imagined situation, and if the great anger the poet expresses in the poem is real or pretended. However, the charge Dunbar makes against Mure — that the man has extracted lines from Dunbar's poetry and inserted them into his own — has a ring of truth about it. The poem certainly reflects the great pride Dunbar took in his own literary artistry, and may also provide some evidence about how poems were transmitted at this time. Four 7-line stanzas rhyming *aabbcbC*. MF and R. McS, K26, Bw64.

- 2 This verse casts aspersions upon Mure's family background by calling him the thieving offspring of a troop of roving vagabonds, or possibly, by suggesting that he is of Moorish descent, if the poet is playing on "Mure" and "Moor."
- 3–4 These verses indicate that Mure has "mangled" Dunbar's poetry — that is, hacked it up — and then presented it to the king. As Hawcutt points out, the word *mugellit*

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(line 3) commonly referred to the hacking up of corpses on the battlefield (Bw 2.426). Breeze (1998, pp. 12–13) suggests that Scots “maggie” may not be, as the OED describes, a derivation of “mangle” or “maul.” Instead the word could come from early Welsh or Cumbrian *mawgl* meaning “to defile or spoil.” Although “mangle” and “defile” are similar, the connotations of the latter meaning could carry a much stronger sense of shame, making Mure’s actions that much more unbearable.

- 5–6 Apparently Mure denies Dunbar’s charges or wishes to debate them. If so, Dunbar says, he will slander Mure from here to Calais, recalling the ancient Celtic tradition of the bardic satirist destroying a person’s name. “From here to Calais” means from one end of Britain to the other. Compare “How Dunbar Was Desired to Be a Friar” (Poem 76), line 34.
- 8–9 These verses continue the figure of dismemberment from line 3 and add to it the image of poisoning. Saltpeter, potassium nitrate (a key ingredient in gunpowder), was foul-smelling and considered poisonous.
- 8      *falle dismemberit hes my meter*. This verse recalls Chaucer’s plea near the end of TC that “non myswrite the, / Ne the mysenetre for deflate of tonge” (5.1795–96). Compare also Douglas, *Envoios* 4.194, where he urges scribes not to “muggill nor mismetyl my ryme” (Bw 2.426).
- 10–13 These verses suggest the nature of the piece that Mure has “written,” which apparently involves serious, possibly slanderous, attacks upon certain high-ranking figures. Dunbar objects to the slander and resents having his poetry adapted for such a purpose.
- 15–16 These verses indicate that what Mure has produced is a pastiche of Dunbar’s verses and his own.
- 18–19 To be a fool out of season is to engage in folly at the wrong time. And since Mure has been acting like a fool, he deserves to receive the close-cropped haircut appropriate to a fool.
- 23      *gar deliver him a babil*. One of the emblems of a fool is his carrying of a bauble, a round glass sphere.
- 23–27 In the *Flyting* (Poem 83), Kennedy suggests that such a punishment would be appropriate for Dunbar, lines 397–99.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 61*

- 24 The Dumfries fool named Cuddy Rig (more often, Cuddy Rig) was a real person who is mentioned several times in early historical records, "the last being 1512, when he is specifically termed a fool" (Bw 2.427).
- 26 Kinsley suggests that red and yellow were the colors of the royal livery (K, p. 300), but garments of those colors were commonly worn by court fools; Curry and John Bute, two of the fools at the court of James IV, wore coats and hose of those colors.
- 27 Apparently bull-baiting was a popular entertainment in Scotland at this time. Bawcett compares *Christis Kirk*, line 211 (Bw 2.427).

**61. Sweet Rose of Virtue**

"Sweet Rose of Virtue" is a lovely, elegant poem in the *amour courtois* tradition. According to Scott it is "Dunbar's most perfect lyric, and one of the supreme lyrics in Scots and English. The three 5-line stanzas move with exquisite grace and smoothness of rhythm, no word, no syllable superfluous or misplaced, no phrase awkwardly turned, no image or thought jarring the mood" (pp. 57-58). Few readers, I think, would disagree. The speaker describes his lady in the imagery of a lovely flower-filled garden. But he laments the fact that this otherwise perfect person/place is lacking in just one essential virtue/plant — *rue* — playing on the two meanings of the word: "pity" and "a heavily scented medicinal plant with yellow flowers." Three 5-line stanzas rhyming *asbsa*. MF only. Mc49, K8, Bw71.

- 1-4 Lilies and roses are conventional emblems of feminine beauty, and here they represent female virtue as well, perhaps because of their long association with the Virgin Mary. Compare *The Tretis of the Twa Marit Wemen and the Wedo* (Poem 84), lines 28-29.
- 2 *of everie hertynes*. Dunbar uses this phrase in "To Princess Margaret" (Poem 32), line 10, to describe Princess Margaret.
- 5 *Except onlie that ye are mercyles*. In love lyrics in the *amour courtois* tradition the lady is normally depicted as being unfeeling and merciless in her attitude toward her suitor.
- 6-10 Here the speaker gazes upon her lovely face, which he describes metaphorically as a lovely garden (compare Campion's famous song, "There is a garden in her face"). He praises it for its freshness and beauty, yet no rue can he find therein.

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- 8      *Bathye quhyte and red.* In medieval idealizations of female beauty, white and red are the two colors most often used to describe a beautiful woman's face; they suggest that she possesses a "peaches and cream" complexion.
- 9      *And balsum herbis apone stalkis grove.* Compare "To Princess Margaret" (Poem 32), line 27, and Chaucer's Knight's Tale, CTII[A]1036.
- 10     *Rew* refers both to the human virtue of having pity or compassion and also to a variety of strongly-scented evergreen herb that in the Middle Ages was used for medicinal purposes, a fact the speaker may be alluding to in line 15.

**62. Beauty and the Prisoner**

This poem is written in imitation of the psychological love-allegory initiated in the Middle Ages by *RR*. Here the speaker, overcome by the sight of his lady's great beauty and her refined manners, finds himself completely in her thrall. As a result, he is taken to the Castle of Penance (i.e., of suffering); he is put in her dungeon by the personified figures of Strangeness and Comparison and guarded by Languor and Scorn, the court jester. But Good Hope, Lowliness (Humility), and Fair Service rally to his support, and then Pity and Thought, aided by Lust (Desire) and Diligence, manage to set him free. In the process the castle's defenders are vanquished. But also destroyed is the figure of Good Reputation, which allows Slander and Envy to mount a counterattack. It is short-lived, however, and King Matrimony quickly chases them off to the west coast. The heir of Good Reputation is then confirmed in his inheritance at court, where he remains with Beauty and the Prisoner. The poem shares many specific features with a number of poems in this tradition, but especially notable are its similarities to the horniletic allegory *King Hart*. A second distinctive feature, as Bawcutt points out, is "the ferocity of the exotic siege, described in a style reminiscent of Barboar's *Brace*" (Bw 2.456). One other notable feature of the poem is that while the love affair briefly creates a scandal, it finally ends with marriage, which is uncharacteristic of most poems in the *amour courtois* tradition. The poem also contains some additional oddities and inconsistencies, possibly the result of transmission errors. Most commentators suspect that this is one of Dunbar's earliest works; there is also the possibility that it is not even by Dunbar, since it is only attributed to him in R, a MS containing only a partial text. See Josephine Bloomfield, "A Test of Attribution: William Dunbar's 'Beuty and the Presoneir,'" *English Language Notes* 30 (1993) pp. 11-19, for the case against Dunbar's authorship. The general consensus, however, is that the poem is his. Fourteen 8-line stanzas rhyming ababbaba or ababbcbc; although there is not a refrain, each stanza ends with the word "presoneir." B (where it is anonymous), and R (where the text is fragmentary). Mc54, K9, Bw69.

### *Exploratory Notes to Poem 62*

- 1–8 This stanza and stanza 6 contain only two rhyme sounds; the others contain three.
- 5–14 In the larger tradition to which this poem belongs, a key element in falling in love is a sudden visual experience — love at first sight. In *RR* the Lover is shot in the eye by Cupid's arrows, which go immediately to his heart. In Chaucer's *TC*, it is Troilus' initial sight of Criseyde that leads him into the service of Love.
- 9 In the final verse in each of the last two stanzas, the lady herself is referred to as "Beauty." But at this point in the narrative *Fresche Besti* is shown to be one of her two most important personified qualities, along with *Sweit Having*; it is the combined power of these qualities that wound the narrator and force him to go bound to the Castle of Penance. This minor inconsistency is also encountered in lines 15–16, where it is clear that *Fresche Besti* is only one of the lady's attributes. *Fresche* is also applied to Beauty in *King Hart*, lines 199 and 251 (Bw 2.457).
- 12 Penance is used to describe the lover's suffering in other poems in this tradition; compare Charles of Orleans, *English Poems*, line 526, and *The Kingis Quair*, line 887 (Bw 2.457).
- 18 Strangenes is the equivalent of *Danger*, who is the porter to the castle in *RR*. In both cases the words mean something like "aloofness" or "d disdain." The lady in the courtly love tradition must be cold and distant until she is won over by the lover's long suffering and faithful service. Compare *King Hart*, line 304.
- 22 This verse appears to be flawed. Strangeness is the porter and so clearly would not be addressing the porter. Kinsley suggests that *anto* means "in the manner of," but that seems unlikely.
- 27–28 Comparaison (line 27) reflects the lady's initial assessment of the lover, as she notes how inferior he is in comparison to her other suitors.
- 32 *wofull prisonoir*. Compare *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), line 208.
- 33 One might expect *Langoar* to be one of the lover's qualities (i.e., his dispirited state of mind), but here it seems to reflect the lady's attitude of complete indifference toward him. In *King Hart*, lines 261–62, where *Langoar* is also a watchman, he serves the lover rather than the lady (Bw 2.457).

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- 39 Scorn accuses the lover of being too uncourteous to be the lady's suitor. The phrase *be this bok* ("by this book") probably refers to swearing an oath on Holy Scripture. Bawcutt compares Charles of Orleans, *English Poems*, line 4152 (Bw 2.458).
- 41-48 Here the lover's own qualities serve him well in proving his worth to the lady. Good Hope reflects his optimistic attitude, Lowliness his humble disposition, and Fair Service his willingness to fulfill his lady's wishes. Good Hope occurs in *RR*, lines 2754-57; *The Kingis Quair*, lines 787-88; and Charles of Orleans, *English Poems*, lines 196-200 (Bw 2.458).
- 45 *I wak.* He awoke? This is one of the poem's minor oddities, since we were never told that he was asleep.
- 49 Pity is the feminine quality most sympathetic toward the lover; compare *King Hart*, lines 339-50 (Bw 2.458).
- 49-56 Here the lover, through the actions of Lowliness, finds allies among the lady's qualities in the figures of Pity and Thought.
- 55-56 Thought (which probably refers to the lady's state of mind) has now decided to change sides and support the prisoner.
- 57-60 Thought, Lust ("Desire," line 59), and Bissines ("Vigor," or "Physical Vitality," line 60) now mount their attack upon the castle. Dunbar works within a tradition of *RR* as the Barons of Love assail the Lady's defenses. The device is popular with English as well as Scots writers, often with religious as well as courtly overtones.
- 65-80 "Stylistically this is Barbour's manner; cf. the siege of Berwick in *Bruce*, XVII, 445-66" (Bw 2.458).
- 68 In *King Hart*, the defeat of the foretower (guarding the castle's main entrance) indicates defeat (line 875).
- 69-72 The exact meaning of this passage is unclear, but Compassion is apparently surrendering and voluntarily offering up the prisoner, in hopes that he will be treated "soft and fair." But line 83 seems to indicate that his pleas for mercy went unanswered, for he is destroyed along with the lady's other negative qualities.
- 73-88 All those things that had thwarted the lover are now destroyed or removed.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 62*

- 79–80 These verses indicate that the tables have been turned — the lady by whom the lover had been imprisoned is now herself under siege.
- 81–82 Bawcutt observes that "Animals, such as bulls, had pins or skewers set in their noses, by which they might be controlled" (Bw 2.459); but perhaps the point here is that Scorn has received a disfiguring wound (which will cause him to be scorned), in addition to being banished.
- 83 Comparison must be put to death so that the lover will have the lady's attention exclusively.
- 84 It is fitting that Langour, the watchman atop the castle wall (lines 33–34), leaps off the wall to his death.
- 86 *Last chasit my ladeis chalmirleir.* There are possible sexual implications in this verse, and perhaps what is implied here contributes to the death of Good Fame (Reputation or Good Name) in the next verse. In *King Hart* the queen's chalmareire (chamber attendant) is Chastity (lines 303 and 416).
- 87 *Gud Fame.* Compare *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), line 164, and *King Hart*, line 116.
- 89–96 Slander is clearly a member of a large clan and finds it easy to assemble an extensive group of sympathizers. Indeed, Slander's cousin (line 93) apparently remains at court even when the bulk of his followers are banished. Compare "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins" (Poem 77), lines 50–54.
- 101 Compare *King Hart*, line 221.
- 103 *band of friendship.* Presumably the bond of matrimony.
- 105–12 In line 87 Good Fame had been drowned in a sack, but now Good Fame is fully restored through the figure of his heir who has recently come of age. Thus the reputations of the lady and the lover, though attacked by Slander, are now above reproach.
- 109 *confirmation.* "The action of confirming a grant, or inheritance" (Bw 2.459).

63. *To a Lady*

This courtly love lyric has often been viewed as one of Dunbar's parodies — Ross, for example, suggests that it "exaggerates wildly the plea of the lover for mercy, burlesquing . . . the conventions of the weeping, wan-visaged suitor" (p. 215). Nevertheless, while the poem is largely a pastiche of courtly love lyric clichés, it is very typical of a popular category of late medieval love poetry. Indeed, the sentiments it expresses are similar to those reflected in the pseudo-Chaucerian lyrics "Complaynt D'Amours" and "Merciles Beaute" (*Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 658–59). Nor are they very different from sentiments voiced by Palamon and Arcite in *The Knight's Tale*, Aurelius in *The Franklin's Tale*, or Troilus in *TC*. Many fifteenth- and sixteenth-century love poems were written in this mode, perhaps the most notable being the lyrics of Charles of Orleans. Seven rhyme royal stanzas rhyming *ahubber*. MF only. Mc50, K12, Bw34.

- 1-2 These verses may contain echoes from *The Knight's Tale* (CT II[A]2775–76 and 2780), and the phrase "sweet foy" is also used by Troilus to describe Criseyde (TC 1.874). Such oxymorons are Petrarchan commonplaces.
- 6 The lover as the lady's feudal vassal, typified in French poetry devolving from Andreas Capellanus and *RR*, burgards in English and Scots poetry of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Compare *TC* 1.427 and 5.939, and *The Kingis Quair*, line 435.
- 15–16 Compare *TC* 4.302–3.
- 24 *andir trair*. The phrase concerns the protection or safe-assurance a lord extends to his vassal. A breach of such a promise would be a serious infringement on a social and legal commitment.
- 28 Pity, Mercy, Ruth — these are the related qualities the lover hopes to find in his lady. Note that in the previous poem Pity plays a key role in persuading the lady to look more kindly upon her wooer, lines 49–56.
- 31 *mayne and mourning*. "Grief and mourning." Compare Henryson's *Fable*, line 1555.
- 36–37 The turtledove in the Middle Ages symbolizes not only fidelity in love but also great feeling and compassion. The poet compliments the lady by making the comparison, but at the same time urges her to feel as warmly toward him as the female turtledove

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 64*

does toward her mate. Barcroft suggests the poet intends a distinction between *dov* and *ravour* (Bw 2.365), but they appear to be synonyms.

- 41 This verse recalls a famous phrase used several times in *The Canterbury Tales*: "For pitie reneth soone in gentil herte" (I[A]1761; IV[E]1986; V[F]479). Compare also Whiting P243.
- 43-49 As the lover's death approaches, he continues to beg for her mercy in his mind, even when all his physical senses have been stilled. Lines 48 and 49 may imply that "unless my mind may think and tongue may move" once more — as a result of having received her mercy — then there is nothing more to say except "farewell, my heart's lady dear."

### **64. Good Counsel for Lovers [Be secret, true, increasing of your name]**

Rules prescribing how a lover should behave occur frequently in medieval works in the courtly tradition. Deriving ultimately from Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, influential passages on this theme occur in such works as Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore*, *RR*, and Chaucer's *TC*. Of special importance are secrecy, fidelity, and the continual improvement of one's good name, along with the careful governance of one's own tongue while ignoring the wicked tongues of others. Three 8-line stanzas rhyming ababbcbC. B only. M68, K11, Bw7.

- 3-4 The lover is urged to behave discreetly so that he will not become the subject of malicious criticism or public condemnation.
- 5 A lover was expected to be generous and giving, not miserly. In *RR*, for example, Avarice is one of the personified vices depicted on the outside of the wall surrounding the Garden of Delight, indicating that stinginess must be excluded from affairs of the heart.
- 8 *secreit*. The great emphasis upon secrecy in medieval love poetry reflects the idea that the lovers' love would be profaned if it became a subject for idle gossip. In *The Kingis Quair*, "Secrete" is the handmaiden of Venus (line 675). Compare also Chaucer's *PF*, line 395, and *TC* 1.743-44.
- 9-16 This stanza focuses on the lover's verbal behavior: he must not be a liar, a teller of false tales, or a gossip, and he must not speak when he should keep quiet.

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- 17 In *RR* the personified figure of Wicked Tongue (Malebouche) is one of the defenders of the Rose. Here the lover is advised to persevere, even in the face of "wicked tongues." Compare Whiting T401–63.
- 19 *Be nochr sa lerge unto thir sawis sang.* This is a difficult verse, but perhaps the sense is "Be not so free in repeating these rules," an interpretation that keeps with the secrecy of the refrain. Alternatively, it could read something like, "Be not so freely given to the spouting of proverbs," i.e., to sententiousness.
- 20 The lover should be humble, not proud. In "Beauty and the Prisoner" (Poem 62) one of the lover's most important virtues is "Lawlines" ("Humility").
- 21 The lover should set an example for others by behaving wisely.
- 22–23 "Do not defame others, and do not proclaim to others the glories of your own love."

**65. *The Golden Targe***

Although Dunbar's *The Golden Targe* no longer holds the same interest to readers and editors that it once did, the general consensus remains that the poem should be considered one of the poet's major works. It is certainly one of Dunbar's most ambitious poems, and it is perhaps the finest achievement among his courtly poems. Like "Beauty and the Prisoner" (Poem 62), it stands directly in the tradition of *RR*. But in this case the assessment of romantic love it offers is quite different, for the poem suggests that passionate love, which can only occur after the overthrow of reason, is ultimately ephemeral and leads to sorrow and disillusionment. What has especially impressed many of the poem's commentators, however, is not the poem's narrative elements but rather its language. Ridley, for example, points out that "The poem is one of the best examples of the aureate style, and despite its artificiality of diction and action contains description which has been justifiably praised for its striking vividness" (1973, p. 1034). Although Denton Fox's suggestion that *The Golden Targe* is "a poem about poetry" (1959, pp. 331–32) has not been widely accepted, there can be no doubt that the poem reflects the poet's preoccupation with the aural and visual effects of words.

Dunbar was above all a court poet, and as such his poetry, particularly *The Golden Targe*, is informed by "the medium of Court pageantry" (Welsford, p. 74). His preoccupation with visual and auditory effects points to the pageant tradition and setting in which he was writing — the court of James IV, and the court's main source of visual and auditory entertainment. James' love of pageantry is well attested, particularly by events such as the Tournament of the Black Lady (see "Of a Black Moor" [Poem 71]) and the various revels staged for events such

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as his wedding to Margaret Tudor (see "The Thistle and the Rose" [Poem 30]) and Bernard Stewart's entry into Edinburgh (see "Eulogy to Bernard Stewart, Lord of Aubigny" [Poem 35]). For a discussion of pageantry and revels at the court of James IV, see Tradenburg, pp. 172–77, especially pp. 173–74. The king's love of spectacle and ceremony went so far as to the tailoring of his own set of mourning robes and his firing of a cannon at the newly constructed *Great Michael* — a ceremonial gesture that resulted in damage done to the costly ship (see King, p. 117). When we read Dunbar's very visual and perhaps "over the top" description of "A saill als quhite as blossom upon spray, / Wyth merse of gold brychtis the stern of day" (lines 51–52), it may be that we are reading a description of a sail that is to be understood as an actual, visible spectacle, not as a cartoonish figure in a dream-landscape.

While *The Golden Targe* may not describe an actual court masque or pageant, Dunbar certainly alludes to that practice and uses the masque's conventions to comment on his contemporary society. King reads *The Golden Targe* as a kind of "anti-masque" that deliberately reverses the conventions of the "court of love," and in which the male narrator, assisted by other men, has to defend his reason against female assailants. Dunbar's allegorical personifications perform on the stage of our imagination: Presence fights dirty, blinding the narrator's reason with powder, after which both the order of nature and the narrator's compact with God threaten to disintegrate. When he wakes up from his dream-pageant, the natural world has returned to order, and all is well again. King writes, "The message of the allegory is a severe one, particularly in view of James IV's philandering habits: to allow Reason [in this poem uncharacteristically represented as a male] to be blinded by female sexuality can destroy harmony" (p. 127).

The stanza form is the one Chaucer had used in his unfinished *Awefulnes and Arcite*, a 9-line pentameter stanza containing just two rhyming sounds; the only other important poem written in this demanding stanza is Douglas' *The Palis of Honour*. Several Scottish poets use it for lover's complaints set within poems, such as Henryson in *The Testament of Cresseid*, line 407–69. *The Golden Targe* is one of the six Dunbar poems included in the Chepman and Myllar printing of 1508. Thirty-one 9-line stanzas rhyming *aabbabbab*: CM, B, and MF, Ms.56, K10, Bw59.

- 1–9 Few poets graft art with nature more craftily than Dunbar. The opening stanza offers a lovely description of dawn on a May morning that is as fresh as it is conventional. In Dunbar, conventions give life to nature. Basucatt observes, "The poet's rising parallels that of the sun and the lark" (Bw 2.414); a kind of elaborated parallel to Chaucer's "Up soos the sonne, and up soos Emelye" (*The Knight's Tale*, CT I(A)2273). But, given the dynamics of Dunbar's craft, the effect is "up rose the poet and up rose all nature." Harrison, commenting on the elaborately decorative language in these first five stanzas, writes that "the first five stanzas with all their sensory appeals quite plausibly lull the narrator into a mood of easy surrender,

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though the thought of surrendering to a person rather than to the flowers and music of nature has not yet occurred to him" (p. 175). By the time Beauty approaches (line 145), this narrator has already been half-seduced by the sensuous world around him.

- 1      *stern of day*. The "star of day" is the sun, although in some poetic contexts the phrase is used for Venus. In his religious poems Dunbar uses it for Christ ("On the Nativity of Christ" [Poem 1], line 3) and the Virgin Mary ("A Ballad of Our Lady" [Poem 4], line 26).
- 2      *Fesper*, the evening star, and *Lacyse*, the moon — i.e., the heavenly bodies of the night — have departed as dawn approaches.
- 4      *goldyn candle matayne*. The "golden candle of the morning," a metaphorical description of the sun, recalls Old English kennings such as *heofon-candel* and *dieg-candel*; similar phrases, however, occur throughout ME poetry. The adjective *matayne*, like the reference to *Fesper* in line 2, suggests the canonical hours of the day, a concept continued in the singing of the birds in the second and third stanzas.
- 7      Perhaps *Phebus* (the sun) being "clothed in a purple robe" suggests both his regal majesty and his role as ecclesiastical dignitary — since *cape* may be read either as "cape" or as "cope."
- 8      *Up raise the lark, the hevyn menstrale fyne*. Compare "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30), lines 12–14.
- 10     *shir birdis sang thair fouris*. The birds' singing is like the singing of the divine hours, which in this case would be the morning service of matins. Compare *The Book of the Duchess*, lines 291–320.
- 14–18    These verses describe the morning dew, Aurora's tears. She sheds her tears because she must leave *Phebus*, who in turn "drinks" them with his heat. These verses recall numerous passages from earlier poems, but compare especially Chaucer's *LGW*: "Tyl on a day, whan Phebus gan to cleere — / Aurora with the stremes of hire heire / Haddie dryed up the dew of herbes wete" (lines 773–75), and *The Knight's Tale* (CT II[A]1493–96). Compare also line 10 of Dunbar's "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30).
- 20     *the tender croppis*. Compare CT II[A]7.

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- 26     *The purpur hevyn, oarscalfit in silvir sloppis.* This is a problematic verse because we do not know the precise meanings of the terms *oarscalfit* and *sloppis*. Blawcutt glosses *sloppis* as "patches," Mackenzie as "bands," and Kinsley as "small clouds." The general meaning seems to be that the purple heavens were suffused with silver streaks.
- 28–36    Depictions of beautiful May mornings, especially in dream-vision poetry, often include a river flowing through the scene; compare *Pearl* (lines 207–22), *Piers Plowman* B.Prol.5–10, and *Death and Life* (lines 26–29). This is also one of the most highly alliterated stanzas in the poem, perhaps to reflect the music of the river. This passage was imitated by Douglas in *The Palis of Honour* (lines 40–42) and in *Envoyas* 12.Prol.59–62.
- 36     "The small pebbles shone as brightly as stars on a frosty night." The phrase "as stars on a frosty night" is a common simile (Chaucer uses it to describe the Friar's eyes — C7 II[A]267–68), but in this instance compare especially lines 113–16 in *Pearl*, which also liken the small stones gleaming in a river to stars that "Staren in welkyn in wynter nygt." Compare Whiting S673 and S685.
- 37–39    Here the glorious air and sky are compared metaphorically to gemstones: crystal, sapphire, ruby, beryl, and emerald.
- 40–41    The description of the garden employs the dignity of heraldic terms and colors to convey its artificial brilliance.
- 42     Flora is the goddess of flowers and springtime; she is also mentioned in line 62 of "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30). In line 48 the speaker, lying on her mantle, falls asleep.
- 46–48    It is a convention in dream-vision poems for the narrator to fall asleep as a result of the singing of the birds, the music of the river, and the fragrance of the flowers. Compare *The Cockoo and the Nightingale*, lines 81–90.
- 46–60    Fradenburg suggests that the account "might well be an idealization of a ship-pageant wheeled into the banqueting-hall and there discharging its burden of disguised ladies" (p. 75).
- 48     "Flora's mantle," on which the narrator falls asleep, is the flower-covered ground. Medieval poets frequently described the spring landscape as being clad in a flowery

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garment; Bawcutt compares *Complaint of the Black Knight*, lines 1–2, and Wallace 9.147: "fesch Flora hir floray mastill spreid" (Bw 2.416).

- 50–54 The dreamer sees a ship rapidly approaching, with white sails and a golden *mewe*, i.e., the top-castle, a raised structure surrounding the ship's mast.
- 54 This simile involving the falcon in pursuit of its prey may provide an ominous foreshadowing of what will later happen to the narrator (Bw 2.416).
- 55–63 One hundred lovely ladies, all dressed in green, emerge from the ship.
- 64–72 Dunbar here employs the "inexpressibility" *topos* (n.b., Curtius, pp. 159–62), claiming that no poet, not even Homer or Cicero, could do justice to such a sight. See Hasler on how the self-reflexive indescribability *topos* functions here: "There is no developed outer layer of narrative activity — no narrator . . . looking back with whatever degree of involvement on youthful folly — to which such lines can finally be referred" (p. 198).
- 71 Compare CT IV(E)1736–7.
- 73 Venus and Nature (and their two temples) are paired and strikingly contrasted in Chaucer's *PF*. The phrase "There saw I" is a descriptive formula used by Chaucer in The Knight's Tale (CT I[A]1995–2040) and *HF*, lines 1214–81.
- 73–90 The poet provides an elaborate catalogue of all the illustrious ladies who were there — including, curiously, Apollo (line 75).
- 75 Kinsley suggests that the phrase *Juno Appollo* is used to refer to Juno as a sky goddess, just as elsewhere the phrase *Phebas Apollo* is commonly used to refer to the sun (p. 250); if so, that would account for the presence of "Apollo" among these female figures. But, as Bawcutt points out, "mistakes over the sex of classical figures were not uncommon in medieval authors" (Bw 2.416). Proserpyna is Persephone, the spring-goddess abducted by Pluto while she was gathering flowers. She figures importantly in Chaucer's Merchant's Tale.
- 76 *Dyane, the goddesse chaste of woddis grene*. Compare Chaucer's Knight's Tale CT I[A]2297.

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- 77 *Clio*, Clio, the muse of history, is also invoked by Chaucer's narrator at the beginning of Book 2 of *TC* (2.8–11). Compare *The Kingis Quair*, line 128.
- 78 *Thetes* (Thetis) is goddess of the sea; *Pallas* (Pallas Athena) is the Greek goddess of wisdom and the counterpart of the Roman goddess Minerva; here, though, Athena and Minerva are treated as two distinct entities. Compare Gower, *Confessio Amantis* 5.1189–1220.
- 79 Perhaps the goddesses Fortuna and Lucina (the moon) are listed together because both of them are often changeable; the moon, because of its constantly changing face, was commonly used to symbolize impermanence.
- 81 *Lucifera* is a feminine form of Lucifer, the name often given to the evening star, Venus.
- 82–90 This stanza describes May and the beautiful gown that Nature bestows upon her. Nature's association with an elaborate gown stems from Alan of Lille's *The Plain of Nature* (trans. James J. Sheridan, Mediaeval Sources in Translation 26 [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980], p. 85). Compare Chaucer's *PF*, lines 316–18.
- 93 *Quakore that I lay ourhelit wyth levis rosk*. The dreamer reminds us of his presence. The ladies entering the garden, however, do not see him because he is hidden among the leaves. See A. C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-narratives* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 94–99 First the birds and the flowers honor and celebrate Nature, their own special goddess. In the next stanza they similarly celebrate Flora and Venus.
- 94–95 Compare lines 71–77 in "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30).
- 96–99 Compare lines 146–47 in *The Kingis Quair*.
- 109–26 Balancing the assemblage of female goddesses is a similar assemblage of male gods; they receive two stanzas rather than four.
- 110–11 In medieval texts Cupid, Venus' son, is normally depicted as a handsome youth, and in several Scottish texts he is also referred to as a king, as here. What is most

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notable about him in every case, however, is his bow and his sharp, *dredfulle arrows* (line 111). Compare *The Kingis Quair*, lines 653–65. For a fuller discussion of Cupid in the Middle Ages, see Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconography* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 95–128.

- 112–17 These verses depict three of the planetary deities — Mars, Saturn, and Mercury — assigning to each of them some of their major attributes: to Mars, anger and power; to Saturn, old age and malice; to Mercury, wisdom and eloquence.
- 114–15 For more extensive depictions of Saturn, see *The Knight's Tale*, CT II[A]2443–69, and Heneysen's *Testament of Cresseid*, lines 151–68.
- 116–17 For a fuller depiction of Mercury, see Henryson's *Testament*, lines 239–52.
- 118–20 Priapus is the god of gardens as well as an emblem of male sexual arousal; Faunus is the god of the open countryside. Both figures are closely associated with fertility. Janus is the god of gates and doorways; in Chaucer's TC, Pandarus prays to him as the "god of entree" (2.77), a phrase that may also carry sexual overtones.
- 120–26 Whereas Priapus, Faunus, and Janus are gods associated with the earth, Neptune is the god of the sea, Aeolus the chief god of the air, and Pluto the god of the underworld. Bacchus, the *gladdier of the table* (line 124), is of course the god of wine.
- 125 Pluto, dressed in a cloak of green, is here portrayed as a kind of faerie king, similar to his depiction in the ME *Sir Orfeo* and Chaucer's Merchant's Tale. Green is a kind of natural camouflage that enhances his lurking (and dangerous) presence. This depiction may reflect the Celtic tradition of faerie abductions that occur in May — the season in which Pluto abducted Persephone. The color green can also be associated with inconstancy, envy, and agents of the devil. See D. W. Robertson, Jr., "Why the Devil Wears Green," *Modern Language Notes* 69 (1954), 470–72.

*elrich*. Etymology uncertain. The word first appears here and in Gavin Douglas, *The Palis of Honour* and *Eneados* 6. Prol. 118, etc., to denote some fantastic connection with the supernatural, the uncanny, weird, or spooky. Bawcutt (1989) notes that "early Scottish writers apply the term to 'browneis' and 'bogillis,' to Pluto and to the Cyclops and the 'weird sistiris,' to angels and also to elves (with whom some etymological link has been posited), to the faery queen and to the desolate places inhabited by ghosts and demons" (p. 112). The modern word is *elritch*.

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- 127 *And evry one of thir is gryne arrayit.* Green apparel was often worn during festivities honoring May. In "The Knight of the Cart" episode in Malory, for example, Gwenyvar orders the ten knights who go a-Maying with her "to all be clothed in gryne" (Works, p. 649); see also the courtly literary dress-up games in *The Floore and the Leaf*, where the royal heralds wear "Chapelets of greene" (line 222), the knights wear crowns of "laurer grene" (line 249), and the ladies choose knights "Clad in grene" (line 401). Compare Dunbar's poem "To Aberdeen" (Poem 33), where the twenty-four maidens who dance in honor of the queen's visit are likewise "All claid in grene" (line 42).
- 133-35 The narrator now draws near to get a better look; compare him to the lurking, curious "poet" in *The Tretis of the Twa Marit Wemen and the Weuld* (Poem 84) in this instance. He pays a heavy price for his looking in that it causes him to fall in love at first sight.
- 136-44 In this stanza the narrator is discovered and "arrested," but, like many a would-be lover, he is neither displeased nor dismayed.
- 136 "Love's queen" — i.e., Venus.
- 139-41 The ladies suddenly reveal the bows that have been concealed beneath their cloaks.
- 145-207 In this group of stanzas the narrator comes under attack from a large company (Dame Beaste, Fair Having, Fyne Portratere, etc.) reflecting the lady's qualities. Some of these figures are very common in medieval love allegory, but others are not so common.
- 146-50 Fittingly, Beauty is the first quality by which the narrator is smitten, and she is quickly followed by her attendant qualities of Attractive Deportment, Fine Appearance, Delightful Nature, and Joyful Countenance.
- 151-53 As in *RR*, Reason attempts to protect the narrator from being overwhelmed by his amorous desires. In this case Reason equips him with a shield of gold — the Golden Targe. As Bewcett observes, the shield of Pallas Athene, which is important in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1.390-435), is a likely influence (Bw 2.419).
- 156 Previous editors have viewed *humble obedienc*e as one of the figures who accompanies Youth. It seems more likely, though, that this phrase simply describes how Innocence, Bashfulness, and Timidity were deporting themselves; compare the

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similar use of the phrase "full of reverence" in line 162 to describe the deportment of the ladies accompanying Sweet Womankind.

- 174 Note that the figure of Comparison plays an important role in defending the lady in "Beauty and the Prisoner" (Poem 62).
- 175 *Will*, meaning "desire," is Cupid's daughter in Chaucer's *PF*, line 214.
- 177 *Wir ye thay did thair bamer kye display*. Displaying their banner on high should probably be seen as a challenge to him to come forth and do battle openly. But he remains entirely passive, hiding behind the golden shield of reason.
- 181-85 Seeing that the battle tactics used thus far have failed, Venus decides to pursue a different line of attack, now shifting to the use of guile. Thus she makes Dissimulation her field general, giving her a free hand in her operations. What follows seems to imply an attempt at a physical seduction.
- 187 *Presence* seems to mean "Intimate Physical Proximity." The fact that she is called "the main anchor of the barge" implies that she is Venus' trump card. Note that in line 196 she is called "Perilouse Presence."
- 188-89 *Fair Callyng* (line 188) is "Fair Welcome" (the equivalent of *Bialacoil* in *RR*), and *Cherising* (line 189) is "Kind Treatment." In *The Kingis Quair* "Fair Calling" is said to be Venus' "uschere" (line 673).
- 190 *Homelynes* means something like "Intimate Familiarity."
- 199-207 As in *RR*, Reason is finally vanquished and then banished, leaving the narrator completely vulnerable to amorous attack.
- 205-06 When Reason has been blinded, he is briefly tormented ("they played the fool with him") and then exiled to the forest wastes.
- 214-16 These are transitional verses that reflect the narrator's ambivalence toward what is happening to him, for without Reason a hell may seem to be a paradise and mercy may seem to exist where grace does not exist. Now that he has been brought into the snare, the narrator is soon to discover that his love for the lady is not requited.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 65*

- 217-25 *Dixymalanc* and her companions, having completed their mission, now desert the narrator, leaving him to *Dangere* (i.e., "Standoffishness" or "Cool Disdain"). In *RR*, *Dangere* is the Rose's protector and the lover's chief impediment.
- 226-27 *Departing*. I.e., "Separation." Now the narrator has been rebuffed and dismissed, leading him to *Heuynesse*, "Depression."
- 229-34 The stormy weather, which completely destroys the beautiful garden, probably symbolizes, or parallels, the emotional torment the narrator is experiencing.
- 235-43 The entire company swiftly returns to the ship where they fire their great guns, causing a huge commotion. The great noise of the guns serves to bring the narrator's vision to its end. Compare Lindsay's *Dreame*, lines 1018-29. The frightening sound of rocks cracking among the cliffs at the din evokes the natural upheaval that occurred at the death of Christ (see Matthew 27:51). This evocation combined with the narrator's fear that the rainbow — God's covenant against catastrophic floods (Genesis 9:13-17) — will break suggests a kind of apocalyptic fear from the point of view of the narrator. For a very different reading of this artillery salute, see Pamela King, who sees the departing shots as Dunbar's nod to James IV, whose enjoyment of ceremonial artillery firing was legendary (pp. 117-18).
- 244-52 When he awakens from his vision, the narrator finds himself back in the same beautiful May setting with which the poem began. However, the joyous sense of reveling in sensuous nature is somewhat lessened, as the narrator finds *The air attemperit, sobir, and amere* (line 249). Having been assaulted, overcome, and depressed by the sensual world (both of Nature and Love), he resembles Amans in Book 8 of the *Confessio Amantis*, who, after being healed of love by Cupid and Venus, goes home sobered and centered, "Thenkende upon the bedis blake" (8.2959). While Gower devotes the end of his poem to prayer, Dunbar devotes his to rhetoric and the English literary tradition.
- 253-70 This pair of stanzas celebrates Dunbar's greatest predecessors among the English poets. Compare *The Kingis Quair*, lines 1373-79, and, for line 253, compare Douglas, *Eneados*, 1.Prol.342, and Lindsay, *Papynago*, line 24. John Gower was Chaucer's contemporary and the author of the *Confessio Amantis*, among other important works. He is one of the two people to whom Chaucer dedicated *TC*, and it is there that he is first called "moral Gower" (5.1856). John Lydgate, the Monk of Bury, was a prolific English writer of the fifteenth century; his works include the *Siege of Thebes*, the *Fall of Princes*, and the *Troy Book*. Hasler notes "This vision

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of literary 'Inglis' [see line 259] as a barbaric tongue civilized into eloquence by means of the rhetoric of Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate is . . . worth pondering" (p. 280); he goes on to compare Dunbar's "clere illuminate" with what Chaucer calls Petrarch's "Erhartyned . . . art" (*Clerk's Prologue*, CTIV[E]33–35), the point being that Dunbar's rhetorical artifice of a narration, like Chaucer's and Petrarch's, elevated "Inglis" to the level of a noble tongue.

- 259 *oure Inglisch*. English was the common language of both the English and the Lowland Scots.
- 271–78 The farewell to one's book became popular in late medieval poetry, but Dunbar is clearly modeling his own farewell upon Chaucer's famous farewell in *TC* (5.1786–92). The modesty *topos* is a standard element in such farewells. Compare Lydgate's *Complaint of the Black Knight*, lines 674–81, and *The Kingis Quair*, lines 1352–65.
- 272 Compare *TC* 5.1790: "But subgit be to alle poesye."
- 278 "Coarse is your clothing," a metaphorical description of his crude and unsophisticated language — a very self-effacing note upon which to end his poem. Compare Douglas' similarly self-deprecating comments in the *envoi* to *The Palis of Honour*, lines 2161–69.

**66. *The Merle and the Nightingale***

The one true debate poem in Dunbar's corpus, "The Merle and the Nightingale" belongs to the significant group of poems comprising the ME bird-debate tradition. These poems touch upon a variety of topics, but one of the most central ones concerns the values and/or dangers of loving women. In Sir John Clanvowe's *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, a poem that Dunbar almost certainly knew, the idealistic nightingale has the role of defending the value of women and the love of them. In this case, however, it is the merle who speaks in favor of loving women and the nightingale who, to the contrary, urges the loving of God. Whereas some of the other ME bird debates remain unresolved or at least somewhat ambiguous in their resolution, here the poem's final resolution is made quite clear — the human love celebrated in courtly poetry is nothing but "frutir" love (line 54), that is, worthless love. Indeed, by the end of the poem both birds see eye to eye and join together in singing the same song, that "all love is lost except but upon God alone." Fifteen 8-line stanzas rhyming ababbcbc, with alternating refrains. B and MF, Mc63, K16, ffw24.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 66*

- 1-2 Similar descriptions of the coming of dawn on a May morning occur in the opening verses of *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30), and "A Ballad of the Friar of Tunsgland" (Poem 54). Aurora's eyes are "crystal" because they shine with her tears, i.e., the dew she drops.
- 3 *a merle with myry nota sing*. The merle is the European blackbird; like most of the birds in the ME bird-debate poems, she is highly regarded for her springtime singing.
- 6 *Upon a blisfull brenche of lawry grene*. In several ME poems, birds that sing in praise of secular, amorous love are perched on branches of laurel; compare *The Floare and the Leaf* (line 109) and Lydgate's *The Churl and the Bird* (line 25).
- 8 *A hesty lyfe in loves service bene*. The refrain sung by the merle reflects the traditional sentiments of the "courtly lover." In this case, "love" probably refers both to the emotional experience of amorous love and to the personified figure of Cupid, the god of love. Note that the narrator in Chaucer's TC depicts himself not as a servant of love but as serving lovers who are in the service of the love: "For I, that God of Loves servantz serve" (1.15). In *The Kingis Quair* birds are also singing in "Ihesus service" (line 448).
- 9-12 This description of the river is similar to the one in *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), lines 28-31, but here the fact that the birds are singing from opposite sides of the river carries an obvious symbolism, reflecting their earthly and heavenly points of view. Perhaps there is an allusion to the pure "river of water of life, clear as crystal" in *Apocalypse* 22:1.
- 14 *Qhohiz angell feaderis an the pekok schone*. The nightingale, in fact, is not noted for its physical attractiveness. But the verse seems to be an echo of line 356 in Chaucer's PF: "The pekok, with his aungels fetheres bryghte."
- 16 *All love is lost bot spose God alone*. The nightingale's refrain, in contrast to the merle's, reflects the traditional Christian principle that love has no value unless it is a reflection of man's love of God.
- 20-23 Compare these sentiments with those sung by the lark in "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30), lines 13-14. Here the merle has assumed the role traditionally assigned to the lark, of greeting the dawn and waking would-be lovers.

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- 21 Flora, the goddess of flowers and plants, is one of the chief goddesses of the springtime and a principal assistant to the goddess Natura. She is celebrated in both *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), lines 40–44, and "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30), line 62.
- 29 *O fule*, "Oh, bird" (i.e., fowl), or "Oh, fool" — or perhaps both, although neither of the relatively polite birds in this poem is very much given to name-calling, in contrast to most of their predecessors in medieval bird-debate tradition. (Note in line 73 that the nightingale also addresses the merle as "Bird.") See also line 41.
- 31 *For both is tynt the tyme and the travail*. Proverbial; compare Whiting T442 and also Barbour, *Bruce* 7.45.
- 35 *Of yong sanctis growis and feyndis, but faili*. Proverbial; compare Whiting S19 and also Lindsay's *Satyre*, lines 233–34.
- 36–39 In these verses the merle argues that according to the law of Nature, people in their youth should behave one way and people in old age another — but that the nightingale, in violation of the law of Nature, desires young people to behave like old ones.
- 41 *Fule* may mean either "fool" or "fowl," but judging by line 73's "Bird," probably the latter.
- 41–45 The nightingale responds by reminding the merle of the injunction found in Ecclesiastes 12:1 to "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."
- 44 *That Him of noctir wrocht lyk His awin fysour*. Genesis 1:26–27.
- 46 "Oh, what was demonstrated there, true love or none?" — a rhetorical question.
- 47 *He is most trew and steiffast paramour*. Compare Chaucer's TC 5.1845–48.
- 53 *And He, of Nature that wirker wes and king*. This is a medieval commonplace, that God is the Creator and that Nature is his chief deputy. See PF and The Physician's Tale (CT VI[C]19–28).

*Exploratory Notes to Poem 66*

- 57–64 The nightingale readily acknowledges the many virtues that God has bestowed upon women; but we should praise God for doing that, not women. In other words, we should worship the Creator, not His creation.
- 65–72 With an ingenuity worthy of the Wife of Bath, here the merle interprets the biblical admonition to "love your neighbor" (Christ's second great commandment — Matthew 22:39 and Mark 12:31) as an open invitation to love the women who happen to live nearby.
- 81–87 Descriptions of the enabling power of love are common; compare, e.g., lines 151–60 in *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* and TC 1.1079–85.
- 89 *Trew is the contrary.* Compare *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, lines 166–67.
- 92 *faire rase glory.* Vain glory was usually considered to be one of the major sub-varieties of the sin of Pride; but it was also sometimes considered a separate sin of the spirit equal in seriousness to Pride.
- 97 *Ayon erroure I confes.* The merle's unexpected and rather tame capitulation recalls the Thrush's surrender to the nightingale in the ME bird-debate *The Thrush and the Nightingale*.
- 102 *the Feindis net.* There are several scriptural references to the devil's nets and snares (e.g., 1 Timothy 3:7 and 2 Timothy 2:26), and Henryson places a similar warning in a bird's mouth in *Fables*, lines 1843–45. Douglas applies this metaphor to love in *Eneades* 4.Prol.246.
- 103 "But love the Love (i.e., Christ) who, because of His love (for man), died." The wordplay on "love" surely derives from the biblical adage that "God is charity" (1 John 4:8, 16). Here Christ replaces Cupid as the true "God of Love."
- 105–12 The antiphonal singing of the two birds links the poem with many other fifteenth-century poems in which the singing of the birds is likened to religious observances; compare also lines 164–75 in "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30).
- 118–20 The narrator finds comfort in knowing that when love fails him in this world, God's love will not fail him. These verses again express the sentiments found near the end of Chaucer's TC (5.1842–48).

67. *Love's Inconstancy*

Whereas *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65) may offer a subtle and oblique indictment of romantic love, this poem does so very directly. As Ross points out, the speaker simply asserts that "love is untrustworthy, inconstant, indiscriminate, inconsiderate, and her pleasure is brief to boot" (p. 216), which surely accounts for his determination to have nothing further to do with it. Ridley aptly describes the poem as "A polished little piece, whose quick, graceful rhythm with its turns is well adapted to the subject of fickleness" (p. 1031). The poem is written in tail-rhyme stanzas of tetrameter and dimeter lines; and only two rhyme sounds are used throughout the twenty-four verses of the poem. Three 8-line stanzas rhyming *ausbaum*, B only, Mc51, K15, Bw50.

- 1       *Quha will behald of love the chance.* I.e., "Let him who wishes consider the fortunes of love."
- 5-6      I.e., "Love begins with inconstancy / And it ends in nothing but variance." In other words, inconstancy is its major characteristic from beginning to end. *Variance* probably implies the desire to pursue new lovers, what Chaucer often terms *new-fargeleneſſe* — novelty.
- 7        In Henryson's *Garnement of God Ladies*, line 15, "continuance" is one of woman's personified virtues (Bw 2.394).
- 9-12     Discretion and consideration are two virtues that love has no control over, and therefore if they were to be found in an amorous relationship, they would not remain for long.
- 11-12    The short duration of love and the pleasures of love is a medieval commonplace; compare Whiting L524.
- 13-14    Love is quick to pursue new acquaintances and quick to abandon old ones. Compare Chaucer's TC 4.414-16, and Whiting L547.
- 15-16    These verses, which reveal the speaker's decision to "give over" love (i.e., abandon it), are the logical result of all of his previous observations.
- 17-24    The final stanza expresses his final evaluation of pursuing love — it is a foolish, ignorant enterprise in which there is nothing to be gained and much time to be lost.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 68*

- 19 *tyme mispendit*. Medieval moralists, including Chaucer's Host (*CT II[B']*18–32), disapprove of the wasting of time; compare also Henryson, *Ane Prayer for the Pest*, line 86: "For we repent all tyme mispent."
- 21–24 I.e., "It would be as foolish to expect love to maintain its allegiance as it would be to command a dead man to dance within his tomb." Perhaps the notion of ordering a dead man to dance is suggested by the *Danse Macabre*, the Dance of Death. But the main idea here is that of the *impossibilita* — it would be just as unlikely for love to remain steadfast as it would be for dead people to dance in the grave.

### **68. True Love [And trew love ryssi fro the splene]**

This poem follows the preceding poem in the B MS, and like the preceding poem, it draws a sharp distinction between "feynt" love (line 6), the imperfect and short-lived love represented by Venus, and true love, the perfect spiritual love represented by Christ. Here the poet merges two related themes, the praise of old age and the aged lover's repudiation of physical love; this latter theme became very popular in late medieval and early Renaissance lyric poetry. In its larger structure the poem consists of three 5-stanza groups. The first group lays out the central point, the second describes the narrator's own experiences when he himself was at the court of Love, and the third celebrates his new love, Christ (Reiss, p. 115). Fifteen 6-line stanzas, with 2-line burden, rhyming *aabbRR*. B only. Mc52, K17, Bw38.

- 1–2 The poem is written in the form of the carol; these initial verses provide the burden used to conclude each of the poem's fifteen stanzas. The phrase *fro the splene* (line 2) — meaning "from the heart" or "from deep within" — is often used by Dunbar. Compare Henryson's *Annunciation*, line 65.
- 3–4 Here, stated succinctly, is the poem's main theme — while Venus' torch has cooled, the fire of true love remains ever burning. For Venus' torch, compare the wedding feast of January and May in Chaucer's Merchant's Tale, where Venus is described as dancing with "hire fyrbond in hire hand" (*CT IV[E]*1727–28). For the cooling of Venus' torch, compare Henryson, *Testament of Cresseid*, lines 29–30. See Burness, p. 216, on Dunbar's use of Venus tropes here and in "To the Queen" (Poem 70).
- 10 *Trew lavis fyre*. Although "trew love" in the refrain (line 8) is akin to divine love that abides ever burning in the heart regardless of Venus, *Trew lavis fyre* apparently alludes to the passions of cupidinous love that wane as Venus' fire diminishes.

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Perhaps *Trew hevis* should be considered a plural form as well as a genitive. Or, if the service of true love in this line and the refrain is the same, then *nevir* should be emended to *evir*, which is, perhaps, the simplest solution. Bewcatt, Mackenzie, and Kinsley read *nevir* without comment. Kinsley notes that saints' lives speak of the divine fire "that bald can hymne" (p. 276), the implication being that such is the love that precedes and also can replace Venus' fires and is always more reliable.

- 21-24 These difficult verses praise the person who instructs his heart to accept true love, thus transcending the ancient quarrel between physical love and spiritual love.
- 27-30 Love's court is the court of Venus and Cupid, which the speaker himself has experienced, and where he has learned that troubles outnumber joys by fifteen to one. The next five stanzas touch upon some of these troubles.
- 59 To "set not a bean" by something is to consider it worthless. This is a very common phrase in medieval texts. Compare CT I(A)3772 and II(B')93, and Whiting B82-92.
- 63-92 In the last five stanzas the speaker celebrates the love of Christ.
- 81-84 These verses are very reminiscent of lines 1842-48 in Book 5 of Chaucer's *TC*.
- 87-90 I.e., "No one in his youth can understand this, except through the grace of God, because this false, deceiving world exerts such great control over the young."
- 90 *in flouris grene*. Compare *King Harr.* line 705, and the refrain in Henryson's *Ressouning betwix Age and Yowth*: "O youth, be glaid in to this flouris grene."

**69. A Wooing in Dunfermline [And that me shoult ane ferly case]**

This comic tale of seduction reflects the characteristics of both the fabliau and the animal fable. Indeed, the cuckolding of the wolf by the fox is one the central stories in the Reynard the Fox cycle, an event also alluded to in the ME comic tale of the *Fox and the Wolf in the Well*. In all probability, the poem is actually a parody of the animal fable, perhaps intended to spoof the fables written by the Middle Scots poet Robert Henryson, who is closely associated with the town of Dunfermline, the place where this comic adventure is set. The descriptive rubric for the poem in B is the "Wowing of the King quhen he wes in Dumfarseling," which has led several commentators to surmise that the poem is a thinly veiled account of an amorous exploit involving James IV. But while there is abundant evidence elsewhere to indicate that

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 69*

James was indeed a philanderer, there are few specifics in the poem to support that suggestion. The poem may allude to a real situation involving real people, but it is impossible to be sure. Ten 7-line stanzas rhyming *ababbcc*, B, MF, and a fragmentary text in R. Mc27, K37, Bw76.

- 1     *This bindir nycht.* This is a common formula meaning "once upon a time" or "just the other night." Dunbar uses it at the outset of a half dozen poems, several of which are dreams (compare Poems 42, 43, 72, 76, and 79).
- 1-2    Dunbar here employs the narrative device of claiming to retell a tale that he has recently heard; compare lines 30-31 in *SGGK*. The choice of Dunfermline for the setting may be to "localize" the action, but it inevitably brings to mind Robert Henryson, the author of a collection of animal fables, who lived at Dunfermline. Dunfermline was also the location of one of James IV's palaces, a fact that may be pertinent to the historical reading of the tale.
- 3-49   This large section of the poem presents a detailed account of the wily fox's wooing and seducing of the innocent lamb — all of which the speaker finds quite astonishing. There is a good deal of irony, however, in the narrator's feigned astonishment at the lamb's feigned innocence.
- 3     *last.* Probably "lately," though possibly "late at night."
- 4     "And with her he played and made good game." The word "play" often occurs in ME in the phrase "to rage and play" (compare *CT* I(A)3274); it usually means overt flirtatiousness and may also imply sexual foreplay.
- 6     *riddin.* Compare *CT* VII(B)3167-69, verses spoken by Chauntecleer in the Nun's Priest's Tale.
- 8-14   The description of the fox's actions in this stanza are quite consistent with real canine behavior. Perhaps it is all undercut in line 13, however, when the lamb, maintaining a posture of innocence, calls upon the Virgin Mary to protect her.
- 11     The word *tooltit* probably means "toyed with" (or possibly "soctled"?); but Dunbar may also be punning on the word *toof* ("fox").
- 12     *Syne lowrit on growfe and askit grace.* This is an accurate depiction of the "play bow" that one dog makes to another when it wishes to be friends.

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- 13 *Lady, help.* The lamb, in crying for the Lady's protection, is momentarily playing hard to get, as is expected of her, even in a work that is more fabliau than romance; compare Alison's initial rebuff of Nicholas in The Miller's Tale (*CT II[A]*3284–86).
- 15–18 The brutishness of the fox is here emphasized, presumably to create a striking contrast with the smallness of the lamb. Aside from its red hair, this creature does not seem much like a fox; perhaps these verses are meant to flatter a certain person (James IV?) for his physique or virility.
- 16 *lowry.* The word may derive from the name *Lawrence*, the Scottish nickname for the fox which was first recorded in Henryson's *Fables*. In English and Continental tradition the fox is usually called *Reynard*, though Chaucer calls him "Russell" in The Nun's Priest's Tale (*CT VIII[B']*3334), which is the name of Reynard's youngest son in the Cycle.
- 18 *silly lame.* Put on "innocent lamb" and "useless lame" (penis), which is too small.
- 19 *To sic ane triball to hold ane base.* Literally, "For such a treble to hold a bass." Dunbar is playing on musical terminology, and at the same time creating a sexual double entendre. For *triball* Kinsley cites "treble/triple instrument"; but also, through wordplay, "such a male genitalia (the triple being penis and two testicles) to hold [mount, pin down] a base (female foundation)." See K, p. 313n19. Bawcutt (Bw 2.471) notes a comparative "bwrdy use of musical terms" in Greene, *Carols*, 46.1. Compare also the Summoner's "stif burdeour" in *CT I(A)*673.
- 20 Here, and in lines 27, 34, 41, and 49, the lamb's behavior seems to surprise the wide-eyed (but rather voyeuristic) narrator.
- 23–25 Compare January's insistence upon having a young, tender wife in The Merchant's Tale — for "bet than old beef is the tendre veel" (*CT IV[E]*1420).
- 34 *girnand gamis.* Compare the descriptions of the wolf's "girsand teeth" in Henryson's *Fables*, line 2630.
- 36 *He held her till her be the bals.* Compare Henryson's *Fables*, line 2699.
- 39 *prenecod.* A pincushion, used here as a euphemistic metaphor for a woman's genitalia. See *DOST*. Burness notes that Partridge, in his *Slang Dictionary*, has it as a term for "the female pudenda" from the seventeenth century onwards.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 70*

- 45     *Bor be quhat maner they war mard.* A problematic verse. Does it refer to the harm done to those who are gossiped about, or to the fact that gossips only harm themselves?
- 48     *Bor all the hollic wet stappit hard.* The sexual double entendre is hardly subtle.
- 50-51    This traditional bit of moralizing provides a narrative transition. Compare Whiting 358.
- 55     *The lamb than cheipir lyk a mowc.* The lamb squeaking like a mouse is probably her attempt to deceive the wolf into thinking that she has been the victim of the fox's unwelcomed advances — and thus the narrator's expression of surprise. But perhaps Kinsley is right, too, in seeing it as "an ambiguous cry" designed "to meet the expectations of both male lovers" (K, p. 313).
- 58-61    The fox hiding beneath a sheep's skin suggests that he has climbed into her closet or wardrobe and has hidden beneath her clothing. Dunbar may also be playing on the phrase "a wolf in sheep's clothing" — here a fox hiding beneath sheep's clothing to escape from a wolf! Bawcutt, however, notes that "the image here is peculiarly sinister, and implies — on one level of the fable — that the fox has killed the lamb" (Bw 2.471).
- 62     The other ewes who make no din appear to be the lamb's chambermaids. They also seem complicitous in their mistress' deception — yet another thing that causes wonderment in the narrator.
- 66     The phrase *the bell*, the reading in MF, is an emendation adopted by most editors, although Bawcutt retains the B reading of *the tod*, the implication being that the wolf visits the fox after the latter has had ten "scores."
- 68     *Protestand for the second place.* The wolf (unknowingly) claims for himself "second place," because the fox has already claimed "first place" — that is, he has taken his pleasure with the lamb first.

**70. To the Queen [Madam, your men said]**

Variously described as tasteless, tactless, and puzzling, this comic-satiric poem has produced a great deal of critical commentary. The one thing about which the commentators agree is that

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they do not much like the poem — Scott, for example, declares that it is "not worth the energy spent on construing it, being an inferior and distasteful thing, though morally serious under the jocularity" (p. 165). The "Madam" addressed is generally assumed to be the queen, and although there is no evidence to prove that assumption, it seems likely, especially in light of what is stated in line 6.

The poem is set on Eastern Eve (or Sheove Tuesday), the day before the beginning of Lent. Eastern Eve provided a final occasion for reveling before the forty days of self-denial of the Lenten season. The poem is thus related to Dunbar's other poems set at this time of the year. A major difficulty in interpreting the poem stems from a number of words and phrases of uncertain meaning. Also difficult to unravel is the complex wordplay involving the term "pockis" ("pox"), a term that could be used to refer to various physical ailments in either people or animals, but one that also clearly implied syphilis. Central to the poem is the meaning of the phrase "libbin of the pockis," which may literally mean "to be cured of the pox," but which appears to be a colloquial expression referring to sexual intercourse. Seven 5-line stanzas rhyming *aubah*, with each stanza ending with the same word. MF and R. Mc31, K32, Bw30.

- 1      *Madow*. A respectful term of address for a woman of high rank. If the woman addressed is indeed the queen, the men would be those belonging to her household.
- 1-5     The opening stanza seems to indicate that the men wanted to set off on their travels without participating in the Eastern Eve festivities but that their wives persuaded them to stay. There may also be a sexual double entendre in the phrase *thal waldryd* (line 1); compare line 6 of the previous poem: "And wald haif riddin hir lyk ane name."
- 2     During the later Middle Ages in Europe, Eastern Eve, the final evening before the beginning of Lent, was a time of carnivalesque entertainments and often of unbridled physical indulgence. "How Dunbar Was Desired to Be a Friar" (Poem 76) is also set on Eastern Eve and may describe a comic pageant presented at court.
- 3     Bawcutt suggests that *flockis* was "chiefly used of animals, and anticipates the farmyard imagery in [lines] 8, and 16-18" (Bw 2:355). Compare Chaucer's Host, who "was oure aller cok, / And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok" (CTII[A]823-24.)
- 4     The phrase *betteis sois* (or possibly *sow*) remains obscure and may result from sexual corruption; still, the meaning of the line seems clear: the wives have requested their husbands not to leave.

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 70*

- 5 Later in the poem the phrase *lib than of the pockis* means "to have sex with them"; no one is quite sure how the phrase came to have that meaning. Here, though, it may carry its literal meaning of "cure them of the pox," possibly referring to medical treatments but perhaps implying that the wives hope to prevent their husbands from having illicit sex; or, that if a man has the pox, the woman might take it from him.
- 6 The phrase *sen ye dwel still* suggests that the queen and her household were about to set off on a journey, perhaps on a round of royal visits.
- 7 For a similar use of "Venus' banquet," compare *The Tretis of the Two Marit Women and the Wedo* (Poem 84), lines 430–31.
- 8 Cockfighting was apparently a popular entertainment on Easter Eve, but the imagery is used here to suggest the men's sexual inadequacy. Compare *The Tretis of the Two Marit Women and the Wedo* (Poem 84), line 326.
- 14 *pamphelot on a plaid*. Bawcutt makes a plausible case for *pamphelot* meaning "a woman of easy virtue" and for *plaid* meaning "plaid" (Bw 2.356). But the meaning of the line remains conjectural. Kinsley glosses *plaid* as "plea, excuse," perhaps implying "a compromised position."
- 16–18 The men who were "riotous as rams" have been become like tame lambs, or, even more humiliating, like old ewes.
- 21–25 This stanza continues the imagery of the men having been unmanned — in this case with images of physical decrepitude that are the result of a surfeit of sex.
- 22 The phrase *wilfing wands* may mean "pliant wands" or it may "willow wands"; in either case it also alludes to the men's sexual inadequacies.
- 23 The description of the men's shins as "sharp (i.e., bony) and small (i.e., skinny) like a distaff" recalls the description of the long, lean legs of Chaucer's Reeve which were like a staff, with "no calf ysene" (CT II[A]591–92). Compare also *Christis Kirk*, line 39.
- 24 *And gottin their bok or bayth thair handis*. This verse may mean that they are placing their hands on their aching backs, or more likely, that they have become so thin that a pair of hands can encircle their emaciated bodies.

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- 30 The Spanish Pox is syphilis. As Bawcutt aptly observes, "Most European nations traced the origin of the disease to their neighbours" (Bw 2.357). See "His Own Enemy" (Poem 20), line 14, and the note to that line.
- 33 *Ther salt reperst qabai with tham yockis.* Compare 1 Corinthians 6:16-18.

71. *Of a Black Moor [My ladye with the meble lippis]*

One of Dunbar's more controversial works, this poem "has been interpreted both as a broad but good-natured caricature and as a display of unusual cruelty and inhumanity" (Ridley, 1973, p. 1023). Here the poet presents the anti-type to the traditional idealization of feminine beauty, an anti-type also seen in the Leathly Lady of medieval romance, a figure with whom Dunbar's depiction shares specific details — e.g., the huge mouth, the cat-like nose, the comparison to a toad. As Bawcutt observes, it appears that "Much care was lavished on the poem, which has vivid animal imagery, and is structured by *repetitio*" (Bw 2.351). It is known that Africans were present in Scotland as early as 1504, several of them serving in the court of James IV as musicians and entertainers. Perhaps pertinent here too are the Tournaments of the Black Lady held in 1507 and 1508, which are described in Pitcairn's *Chronicles* (1.242-44) and in *The Treasurer's Accounts* (T.A. III, 258-94). During these tournaments, jousts and mock battles were held, and "the focus of the rivalry of the jousters was a Black Lady, presumably one of the 'Moris [Moorish] lasses' mentioned in the court records of the time" (Ross, p. 70). It is possible, as Fradenburg suggests (p. 174), that the black lady that the poem "blazons" could have been the Black Lady of the Tournament, whereby the savagery of the description becomes part of the carnivalesque cruelties. Five 5-line stanzas rhyming aabbab, MF and R, Mc37, K33, Bw28.

- 1-2 Medieval poets commonly lavish praise upon the fair white complexions of the ladies they celebrate, often comparing their skin to the ivory of the narwhal ("as white as whale bone" is a common simile). Dark-complexioned women are also sometimes celebrated in medieval literature, though they are likely to belong to the lower social classes. The term *blok* in line 2 could be used for a woman of dark complexion; but as the poem develops, it becomes clear that the poet is describing an African.
- 5-6 Contrast Chaucer's Prioress, whose mouth is "fal smal, and thereto softe and reed" (CT I[A]153). Bawcutt notes that "physiognomists considered large lips a sign of folly" (Bw 2.351).

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 71*

- 6      *lyk an ape.* Europeans were familiar with the Barbary ape, which they considered ugly and grotesque. Symkyn's bald head in The Reeve's Tale is compared to that of an ape (*CT II[A]3935*).
- 8      Pug or snub noses were considered very ugly, an attitude Chaucer touches on in The Reeve's Tale with the "camas" noses of Symkyn the miller and his daughter (*CT II[A]3934, 3974*). In a matched pair of sarcastic love letters in MS Rawlinson Poet. 36, the lady compares her lover's nose to that of a hare or a cat, and he returns the compliment with interest, saying that her "camasyd nose, with nose-thryllys brode" could be used in church to quench tapers burning on the altar (see *Secular Lyrics*, ed. Robbins, pp. 219–22).
- 9      *And quibow schow schynes lyk ony soep.* Barwick points out that soap was chiefly used "for washing clothes rather than persons" and "was made from a mixture of tallow, fish-oil, and potash" (Bw 2.352).
- 12     The image of the "tar barrel" is probably meant as a comment both on her blackness and on her physical shape. A lady's very slender waist — reflected in a phrase like "her sides small" (i.e., narrow) — was the standard for admiration.
- 13     This verse may either suggest an explanation for the lady's blackness — she is black because she was born during an eclipse of the sun — or it may rudely suggest that at her birth the sun was so frightened that it hid itself. Compare *Crying of one Play*, line 55.
- 14     Following up on the previous verse, the speaker suggests that the personified figure of the Night will gladly fight as her champion, implying that the figure of Day would want nothing to do with her. There may be wordplay on "night" and "knight," also. And this verse might also refer to participants in a court pageant involving a mock joust.
- 23–24    The loser's reward is that he must kiss her "hips." Absolon in The Miller's Tale is tricked into performing this humiliating act; and Chaucer's Host also alludes to it in his angry exchange with the Pardoner (*CT VII[C]948*). Compare the *Flying* (Poem 83), line 131.

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72. *In a Secret Place* [Ye brok my hart, my bony ane]

Medieval literature produced a wide variety of love-dialogues, including the *parrourie*, a poem involving the attempted seduction of a rural maiden by a young courtier, and the *asbe* or *asbade*, the dawn song of parting lovers. A third notable variety is the dialogue of the night visit, in which a young man tries to woo his love from beneath her window or in some other private place. Dunbar's poem belongs to this latter category, and like several other examples in this tradition, it provides a lower class counterpart to upper class wooing. The humor in Dunbar's poem arises primarily from the use of comic inversions, from the would-be courtly behavior of a pair of lovers who are decidedly uncourtly, and from the amorous endearments the lovers lavish upon each other, endearments rich in sexual double entendre and ludicrous incongruities. Ridley may be right in suspecting that some of the more obscure phrases spoken by the lovers are actually nonsense terms designed to create the effect of baby talk (1973, p. 1019). Bawcutt notes that this "genre was popular in sixteenth-century Scotland, and Bannatyne contains a number of examples, extremely varied in tone and treatment: these include Henryson's *Robene and Makyn*, and several anonymous pieces" (Bw 2.343). See Burness on poetic uses of bawdy language in Dunbar. The poem is attributed to Dunbar in MF, an attribution that most scholars have accepted, despite the fact that in B it is attributed to Clerk. Nine stanzas rhyming *aabbcc*, with alternating refrain. MF, B, R, and Osborn. Mc28, K13, Bw25.

- 1-2 It is a common convention in medieval dialogues and debates for a third party to overhear the dialogue, which he then duly reports. Perhaps in this case, then, it was not such a "secret place" after all, if the narrator has been able to eavesdrop so readily.
- 2 The terms *beyrne* and *bricht* — "young man" and "attractive lady" — are commonly found among the stock vocabulary of alliterative poetry and usually imply a high degree of social standing — which will turn out not to be the case.
- 3-7 In these verses the young man makes the standard appeal of the courtly lover, beseeching his lady whom he has long served to show him some kindness. Through line 7 the poet has offered few hints that the poem will become a burlesque of *amour courtois*.
- 3 *My hury, my hart, my hoip, my heill.* Alliteration, which is especially noticeable in this verse, is just one of several sound devices often used in the poem. Compare Mary's Wallace, ed. McDiarmid, 11.569.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 72*

- 6 Her coldness toward him, her danger, suggests that she is the disdainful lady of courtly love tradition.
- 8 Compare the description of Absolon in Chaucer's Miller's Tale: "He kensbeth his lokkes brode, and made hym gay" (*CT* I[A]3374).
- 8-14 The second stanza completely undercuts the initial impression created in the first stanza, as we discover that this young man is no more a true courtly lover than is Absolon in Chaucer's Miller's Tale.
- 10 The young wooer here is "tourish," no country bumpkin like Robene in Henryson's *Robene and Molyne*.
- 11-14 These verses recall Nicholas' "wooing" of Alisoun in The Miller's Tale (*CT* I[A]3276-87).
- 13 *folkit*. The term means exactly what it says, and this is one of the earliest recorded occurrences of the word. There may be an earlier use of it in a collection of proverbs and sayings contained in MS Peniarth 356B of the National Library of Wales: "Wemen were wode and sweryne by the rode / That they ewyles fuc ne men / Men were wys and turnyd her geryes / And swayud harn" (fol. 149v, lines 1-4). Compare "wanfulkit" in the *Flyting* (Poem 83), line 38.
- 15 *sweet as the honeye*. For the clichéd simile "sweet as the honey," compare Whiting H430.
- 16-17 Compare Diomedē's similar, though more courtly, assertions to Criseyde in Chaucer's *TC* 5,155-8.
- 18-19 The images in these linked verses are intentionally incongruous.
- 22 This verse obviously echoes Alisoun's "'Tehee!' quod she" from The Miller's Tale (*CT* I[A]3740).
- 23 *rachas*. Hawcutt suggests that a rachas might be a stuffed calf-skin that was placed beside a cow to trick her into giving milk. Or, perhaps the term is a nominal form of *reash*, meaning a tactile effect for whatever purpose. See OED *reash* sb. 1.a.
- 26-27 She suggests that he is the only lover she has had for an entire week!

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- 29 *clover . . . curfodlie.* Compare the similar comparison of Alisoun to wild flowers in The Miller's Tale: "She was a prymerele, a piggesrye" (C7 I[A]3268). Kinsley follows DOST and glosses curfodlie as "ribwort plantain" or the wild scabiosa (K, p. 257), which, like the clover, is round-headed in bloom. This, according to Burness (p. 210), suggests the shape of the vulva, thereby enhancing collectively the obscene endearments of the first wife's fantasy.
- 30 *hasty soppis.* "Honey sops," which was bread soaked in water and honey. Chaucer's Franklin prefers his "sop" soaked in wine (C7 I[A]334).
- 31 *Be not oure boistour to your hilie.* Perhaps the joke here is that he is asking her not to be too rough with him, the reverse of what we might expect.
- 33–34 The comparison of a lady's white neck to the whiteness of whale bone (the ivory from the tusk of the narwhal) is a commonplace. See note to "Of a Black Moor" (Poem 71), lines 1–2. But Bawcutt is probably right in suggesting that *heylis* (line 33) means "heels," not "neck" (hair), thus creating a "greater comic incongruity" (Bw 2.345). It is her white heels, then, that cause his sexual arousal.
- 34 *quibilewillie.* The term refers to his penis (compare "pillie" in line 25 of "A Dance in the Queen's Chamber" [Poem 56]). It is possible the word was made up for the occasion (and perhaps also to satisfy the rhyme scheme), but in the United States "willie" is still a common slang expression for the penis. The "billy" element in this compound noun may allude to his lily-white penis, or it may allude to the fleur-de-lis, which sometimes carries phallic overtones. Burness notes the term in Lyndsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estatutis* (line 4372) where the sense is "an attack of sickness, a spasm," which makes a kind of sense here too (p. 214).
- 37 *mychane.* One of several unexplained words in the poem. The context suggests that it is a slang expression for some part of the body, perhaps the mouth or stomach.
- 38 *belly haudran . . . burie bowsy.* Neither of these expressions has been fully explained, though both are evidently terms of endearment. *Haudran* is perhaps some form of "hood" or a woman's covering (see DOST on *haude*). In The Merchant's Tale Januarie's God sees Adam as being "belly-naked" and in kindness supplies him with Eve (C7 IV[E]1326), apparently as a belly-cover, which seems to be the same way that the woman here looks upon her eager friend. *Bowsy* is perhaps a term of affection for a clumsy person with a big belly. See DOST.

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- 39 *slawry*. This word, which also occurs in line 41, is apparently a slang term meaning something like "fellow."
- 40 *Your musing wauld perse are harte of stane*. Compare Chaucer's *TC* 3.114 and Whiting H277.
- 43 *Alisoun* in The Miller's Tale is also compared to a kid (i.e., a young goat), *CT* 3(A)3260. See Burness, pp. 212–14, on sexual associations with various animals.
- 44–48 *brylyous*. The term is obscure, but Kinsley suggests "pudendum malebre." It seems likely that most of the images in lines 44–46 refer directly or euphemistically to the female genitals. See Burness, p. 210, on *tirly mirly* (line 46) for female pudendum (compare eighteenth-century *tirly-whirly*), and *nowdy* (line 48) for buttocks (n.b., "Towdy-fie," a fine for fornication). *Mowdy* (line 46) is a variant of the verb *mow* ("to copulate" — *DOST*).
- 48 *stang*. This term (meaning "stake" or "pole," or possibly "sting") refers to his penis.
- 51 *Welcom, my golk of Marie land*. This difficult verse is usually explained as an allusion to *King Berdok*, another comic wooing poem contained in B.
- 52–53 *chirrie . . . wryoun*. On food with sexual associations, see Burness, p. 214.
- 53 *my sowkler sweet*. See lines 23–24 for other suggestions of what Burness refers to as the sexuality of "mammary stimulation" (p. 214).
- 57 The *spill rubye* may refer to the actual gift of an apple, and Bawcutt may be right in suggesting that it is also "a humorous reference to ruby rings given as love tokens" (Bw 2.346). Compare Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*, line 582, and Lindsay's *Squire Meldrum*, lines 1003–06. Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde also exchange rings, but it is the brooch she gives him that contains a *rubye* (*TC* 3.1368–72). Still, one cannot help wondering whether it is also a euphemistic reference to his penis.
- 59–61 Here the lovers engage in the *dery dan* (line 60), which is clearly the dance of love where "both of their joys are met in one." A similar phrase, the "dirrye dantoun," occurs in line 24 of "A Dance in the Queen's Chamber" (Poem 56), where it is used to describe a sexually suggestive dance.

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- 62–63 These final verses suggest that their amorous passions have been satisfied and that he is about to leave, thus prompting her expression of regret.

*73. These Fair Ladies That Repair to Court*

This comic-satiric poem celebrates, with tongue in cheek, the ability of women to further their husbands' legal interests by "soliciting" at court. The satire is aimed both at judicial corruption and at women who are willing to grant sexual favors for personal gain. Ridley's comments on the poem seem especially apt: "It has been claimed that Dunbar does not pen, but this graceful minuet seems to be built upon just such a device. The tripping meter serves to intensify the irony, for it results in a rather dainty movement, one appropriate to woman's refinement but here used to describe her prostitution" (1973, p. 1030). Six 8-line tail-rhyme stanzas rhyming abababab. MF, B, and R. Mc48, K71, Bw74.

- 2      *courte or kand*. The word *courte* may refer either to the royal court or to the court of justice; in this case it may refer to both. The word *kand* may mean both "well-known" and "known carnally."
- 5      *gad men*. "Husbands," and, ironically, 'good men'" (Bw 2.465).
- 14     *collations*. A light refreshment often taken in the evening, and the word came to suggest a private evening of amorous intimacy. Compare Henryson, *Testament of Cresseid*, line 418, and Lindsay, *Satyre*, lines 437–38.
- 17     *Ye may wit well that have gret feill*. Dunbar is no doubt punning on *feill*, which means "having a natural ability for something" but also implies its literal, physical meaning of "feel."
- 19     "True as the steel" is a clichéd simile; compare Whiting S707 and S709; here it is used ironically.
- 31–32    A sexual double entendre on the word *spend* (line 31) seems likely, since the implication is that what they are "spending" is not money.
- 32     *geir*. The terminology, meaning "property/sexual apparatus" (K), controls a reading of the poem, and by focusing and fusing the themes of selling sex and legality, neatly satirises both women and jurisprudence" (Burness, pp. 211–12).

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 74*

- 35–40 *Compositours*. The legal officials responsible for drawing up the financial settlements for people whom the court had found guilty of various crimes. It is not surprising that they were often accused of taking bribes. Compare Lindsay, *Satyre*, lines 2660–64.
- 47–48 The sense is: "Such (ladies) can succeed, and no one can stop / Them, because of their honest reputations."
- 48 *honesté*. "Dunbar plays ironically on the word's various implications: honour, moral integrity; the more specific sense, chastity; and the mere outward show of such virtues" (Bw 2.466). Hamlet does much the same when he asks Ophelia if she is "honest" (*Hamlet* 3.1.102–06).

### **74. Tidings from the Session**

This satiric commentary on the legal corruption rampant in Edinburgh is presented through the voice of a naïve, impressionable "moorland man." Having just returned to his rural home from the city, he offers his neighbor a rapid-fire catalogue of all the shocking goings-on at the Court of Session, concentrating primarily on the illegal or morally dubious actions of lawyers and their clients. Henryson's fable of *The Sheep and the Dog* provides a similar satiric exposé (*Fables*, lines 1146–1320). In the final stanza he turns his attention to the equally corrupt practices of the clergy. Eight 7-line stanzas rhyming aabbcc, with slightly varying refrain. MF, B, and R. Mc43, K74, Bw2.

- 1 Basquett suggests that this opening line conveys "scorn for the simple peasant" (Bw 2.282). That may be so, but it does not undermine the truthfulness or accuracy of what he is about to report; his naïveté is contrasted with the corruption of the city in a fashion reminiscent of the fable of the town mouse and the country mouse.
- 1–7 The poem begins dramatically with the newly-arrived countryman being accosted by his neighbor, who is eager to hear the news of the outside world. The countryman, who has just climbed down from his horse, is happy to comply.
- 3 *Quhar tythingir, gossope, peace or weir*. The neighbor's question turns out to be wonderfully ironic. He wants to know the answer to the big questions — whether there is "peace or war" — but what he will hear is that people are completely caught up in their own petty concerns.

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- 5     *I tell yow this, andir confassione.* The speaker makes it clear, here and in lines 8-9, that what he is telling his neighbor is said in confidence. His experience at the Session, apparently, has given him cause to be distrustful of his fellow man.
- 7     The Session was the highest judicial court in Scotland. The king's council constituted its membership, and it sat for lengthy sessions two or three times a year at the Tolbooth in Edinburgh.
- 15     *asidir.* Lit., "a cart load." The term was used colloquially to mean "a great many."
- 15-42    These four stanzas itemize the actions and activities of those who come to court. The word *sun* with which most of these verses begin means "one" or "a certain one" rather than "some," although it is also meant collectively — i.e., each *sun* represents a type of behavior practiced by many.
- 15-21    This stanza emphasizes the duplicity and hypocrisy that characterize the behavior of many people at court.
- 18     *pattirir.* The word literally means "patters," i.e., speaks rapidly; this verb apparently derives from the rapid, mechanical recitation of the *Pater Noster*, the Lord's Prayer.
- beidis. Literally, beads, i.e., the beads of the rosary; but it became a standard metonym for "prayers."
- 20-21    I.e., "One bows quite low and bares his head (in a show of false humility) whose demeanor would be quite haughty under other circumstances."
- 22     *Som bydand law layin land in wed.* Some who are still waiting for their cases to be heard are forced to mortgage their own land in order to survive.
- 29     *exceppis.* Formulate objections.
- 30     *Som stondit beyd and skayld law keppis.* Some bystanders are able to glean small amounts of legal knowledge or terminology, which they presumably use in a pretentious, pseudo-learned fashion.
- 37     For the image of a "fox in sheep's clothing," compare lines 58-61 of "A Wooing in Dusfermlyn" (Poem 69).

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- 38 I.e., his kindness is expressed in words but not in deeds.
- 41 Soir. Lit., "Seat," collectively meaning the seated members of the court.
- 43-56 Now the satire shifts to the orders of friars and monks who come to court, ostensibly for the purpose of recruiting new members, but Dunbar draws upon the familiar portrayal of the lecherousness of the monks and friars.
- 45 The Carmelites, or White Friars, were a contemplative order originally established on Mount Carmel in the Holy Land. The *Cordelairis* is another name for the Franciscans, or Grey Friars, originally founded by St. Francis of Assisi. They could be identified by the knotted ropes or cords tied around the waist of their robes.
- 48 "The younger ones learn from the example of the older ones" — here, ironically, they learn their bad habits.
- 50-51 *hot complexion*. The phrase may well suggest that the bodily humors of blood and choler were dominant features of the monk's personality. But what Dunbar appears to be doing in this pair of verses is juxtaposing the monk's contradictory qualities — his hot complexion and his devout mind — to create the kind of humorous non sequitur that Chaucer sometimes used. Compare, for example, Chaucer's statement in the General Prologue that the Monk was "A manly man, to been an abbot able" (I[A]167).
- 50-56 These final verses depicting the "young monks of hot complexion" are filled with sexual double entendre, much in the fashion of Chaucer's portrait of the Friar in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*.
- 52-53 "And in the court they subdue their proud flesh / In a fatherly fashion, with gasps and pants" — verses with an obvious double meaning.
- 54-55 More verses with an obvious double meaning — the monks' intercession is so gentle and gracious that women are readily disposed to give them what they want.

**75. To the Merchants of Edinburgh**

The poem is both a powerful satiric exposé of the many social and economic ills that beset Edinburgh and an exhortation to the wealthy merchants of the city, very likely the important

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burgesses who sit upon the burgh council, to remedy this shameful state of affairs. Bawcutt is surely correct in suggesting that Dunbar "appeals to their civic pride . . . , their self-interest . . . , and above all their moral sense" (Bw 2.404). The poem is especially memorable for its vivid and realistic portrayal of late medieval urban life. Eleven 7-line stanzas rhyming *aabbabb*; the fifth verse, which provides the internal refrain, is a dimeter (and thus similar to the *bob in a bob and wheel*); also, each stanza ends with the word *name*. It is an unusual stanza form and one not used elsewhere by Dunbar. R only. Mc44, K75, Bw55.

- 4 The "common profit" refers to the general well-being of all. It is the opposite of the "Singular proffit" (an individual's self interest) mentioned in line 71. Compare Chaucer's *PF*, line 47, and *C7 IV[E]431* and 1194.
- 5-7 These verses convey the poet's appeal to their civic pride, a theme sounded throughout the poem.
- 8 *gatir*. While often meaning "gates," the term may actually refer to the city's major streets rather than to its gateways.
- 9 *For stink of haddockis and of scattis*. The stink the poet mentions may not be caused by the fish alone. As Kinsley observes, "fishmongers and butchers threw their trimmings into the streets, which were piled high with middens on both sides" (K, p. 367).
- 12-14 Again the poet expresses his concern with what visitors to the city will think.
- 15-19 These verses create a vivid sense of the city's dark and gloomy streets, passageways, churches, and houses, a condition the poet believes is a disgrace.
- 15-16 There is uncertainty over the meaning of the *Stinkand Staff* (line 15), but it was probably a rank passageway that was crammed with stalls, not a school, as some have suggested. Whatever it was, it blocked the light to St. Giles parish church in the High Street.
- 17 *forstairis*. Wooden staircases attached to the fronts of the multi-storied tenements.
- 22 The High Cross was the Mercat Cross, or market cross, located to the northeast of St. Giles Church. It was the symbolic center of the city "where proclamations were made and punishments meted out" (K, p. 367). A fragment of the medieval cross

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still survives, which has been incorporated into a nineteenth-century building (Bw 2.405). Compare the *Flyting* (Poem 83), line 211).

- 24 *Trone*. The public weighing house. Every Scottish burgh had one, and it was always located in close proximity to the market cross; in Edinburgh it was at the corner of West Bow and Castle Hill.
- cokill and wilk. "Cockles and whelks."
- 25 *Jok*. Jock or Jack, a conventional name for a man of lowbirth. Compare "To the King" (Poem 48), line 66 and "Master Andro Kennedy's Testament" (Poem 80), line 73.
- 29–30 The minstrels maintained by the burgh are criticized for their limited and trite repertoire. *Naw the day daws* has been identified as a popular song of the time, but *into Jean* remains unidentified (line 30). Compare Douglas, *Encadou* 13.Prol.182.
- 31–32 The meaning of these verses is uncertain. *Sone/ Cloas* (line 31) may be the Irish saint St. Cuanus who was linked with eating and drinking; but it is also possible that the phrase simply refers to a mock saint. The general point, in any case, seems to be that truly talented musicians are given no real opportunities. Compare Lindsay, *Sayre*, lines 1371 and 4388.
- 34 *To hold sic monaris on the moysse*. This line refers back to the inept minstrels in the hire of the city. Barcroft suggests that the phrase refers to gallows birds, criminals left to hang on the gallows who "make faces" at the moon (Bw 2.406).
- 36 Dunbar's scornful opinion of tailors and shoemakers is more fully revealed and explored in "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins" (Poem 77).
- 38 *merchauntis at the Stinkand Styff*. In the fifteenth century there was a tenement of several stories built along the north side of St. Giles which was "pierced by two passages, one of which was the notorious Stinkand Styff that led directly to the north door of the church" (Bw 2.406). Dunbar is not the only one to be offended by it.
- 43–46 City records comment on Edinburgh's "multitude of beggars" (Bw 2.406).
- 57 *Session*. The important judicial court that Dunbar satirizes in "Tidings from the Session" (Poem 74).

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- 71–72 Here the contrast and conflict between *Singular proffit* (line 71) and *common proffit* (line 72) is made explicit.
- 74 Jerusalem, the city of God, provided the model after which earthly cities should aspire.
- 76 "That at some time (in the future) you will be governed by reason."
- 77 In this verse there is a blank space in the manuscript; the emendation here supplied seems as likely as those supplied by others; see textual note to this line.

**76. How Dunbar Was Desired to Be a Friar**

This poem presents one of Dunbar's strongest indictments of the friars, in particular the Franciscans, and its negative critique is consistent with the anti-fraternal feelings he expresses elsewhere. The poem is cast in the form of a vision in which the dreamer has a supernatural visitation, in this case from a figure who appears to be St. Francis of Assisi but who is actually a fiend. The central symbol in the poem is the friar's habit, which the visitant tries to lay over the dreamer and which the dreamer leaps from his bed to avoid; this despised habit, clearly, is the tangible emblem of the falseness and hypocrisy the poet associates with the friars. Is it possible that Dunbar had once been a novice in the Franciscan order and that he decided not to enter the order? This is a question that scholars have hotly debated, with no consensus emerging. Most recent commentators, however, tend to view lines 33–45 as being in the tradition of the mock confession; that is, his description of his travels "in freiris weid" ("in a friar's habit," line 36) is actually a fiction and should not be viewed as providing evidence about the poet's life. Ten 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabbA*. B, MP, and R. McA, K55, Bw77.

- 2 *Sancr Francis*. St. Francis of Assisi (c. 1181–1226) founded the first of the fraternal orders of the friars, and his order was dedicated to poverty and to ministering to the poor and sick. Dunbar is probably not satirizing St. Francis nor the ideals of this order, but rather the practices of his later followers. Many Franciscan houses were established in Scotland in the later Middle Ages.
- 2–5 In "Tidings from the Session" (Poem 74) the speaker describes how older friars attempt to recruit younger men for their orders (lines 43–48), and here a figure in the guise of St. Francis appears before the dreamer in the hope of recruiting him to the Franciscan Order. His admonition to the dreamer in line 5 to repudiate the world

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probably reflects the vows of poverty and chastity that were sworn by members of the regular clergy.

- 8–10 The friar's habit which the "saint" tries to place over the dreamer terrifies him so much that he leaps away from it and "would never come near it." Dunbar may be playing upon the idea encountered in various tales and romances that if a mortal has physical contact with fiendish persons or objects it will lead to his damnation.
- 13 *Thow that hys lang done Ymer lawis reiche.* This verse probably alludes to Dunbar's courtly poems, which may well have been among his earliest works.
- 15 *Delay it nocht, it mon be done but ariad.* Here, as in line 5 and lines 29–30, there is a strong degree of coercion in the "saint's" manner of address, which contrasts with the dreamer's meek politeness.
- 19 *Bor thame to weir it never come in my mynd.* The dreamer makes it clear in this verse that he has never entertained any intention of becoming a friar.
- 20 *Sweit confessor.* "Sweet confessor" is both a deferential and a correct manner of addressing a saint such as St. Francis who was not a martyred saint. Bawcutt suggests that "It has a further point here, since the friars' right to hear confessions was much resented" (Bw 2.473).
- 21–24 The speaker denigrates the friars by suggesting that far more saints were produced by the secular clergy than by the regular clergy; this point of view is not surprising, since Dunbar was probably a member of the secular clergy. The speaker's desire to wear a bishop's robe rather than a friar's habit may also hint at Dunbar's long-standing desire for ecclesiastical preferment within the secular clergy.
- 26–27 These verses reflect the various means by which the friars might urge young men to join their ranks — through letters, sermons, and other written documents.
- 34 From "Berwick to Calais" symbolizes the geographical extremes of England, from Berwick on Tweed in the far north of England, to the small portion of French soil around Calais that England still controlled. Compare "A Complaint against Mure" (Poem 60), line 6.

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- 38 *Darntoun kirk.* The collegiate church in the English town of Darlington, in the shire of Durham. It would have been a stopping point along the main pilgrimage route from the north of Britain to Canterbury.
- 44 *Quakilk mycht be flosir with no holy watter.* This claim is surely hyperbolic, since holy water had the power to drive out evil spirits. Indeed, the very mention of it may contribute to the apparition's sudden disappearance in the next stanza. Compare Whiting D208.
- 47 *Ane fiend he wes.* Bawcutt (1989) compares the passage (lines 46–48) to other fiend poems like "Diabolus et Virgo" and "The False Knight on the Road" (p. 171).
- 48–50 The thwarted fiend departs, but he does not go without leaving a certain amount of wrack and ruin in his wake, probably reflecting his displeasure. Fiends were often given to making dramatic exits. Compare, for example, the exit the fiend makes in Malory (Works, p. 500) after failing to seduce Percival during the Grait Quest. On diablerie in Dunbar see headnote to "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins" (Poem 77).

77. *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*

Set on Eastern Eve, the last day before the beginning of the Lenten season, this is one of Dunbar's most carnivalesque poems. It is a comically grotesque dream vision in which the dreamer observes a pair of elaborate and hellish entertainments. The poem has two major sections of 108 lines each, separated by a brief comic interlude of twelve lines. In the first half of the poem, Mahoun (a conventional synonym for Satan) summons for his entertainment the personified figures of the Seven Deadly Sins; accompanied by their personal entourages (consisting of damned souls who practiced those particular sins), they perform an elaborate and rather gruesome dance. This section of the poem is informed by a wide variety of medieval materials that pertain to the seven deadly sins and graphically depict the torments inflicted on sinners in Hell. Fradenburg (pp. 173–74) comments on the poem's pageantry and notes that the poem presents the "specifically monarchial poetics of spectacularity" (p. 224) at which Dunbar excels. See also Welsford's remarks on the poem's revel qualities: "The ground of the poet's imagination is a wild mummery or morisco" (p. 75). Bawcutt (1989) classifies this poem, along with "The Antichrist" (Poem 51), "A Ballad of the Friar of Tungland" (Poem 54), "How Dunbar Was Desired to Be a Friar" (Poem 76), and "The Devil's Inquest" (Poem 79), as diablerie poems — "all bad dreams or nightmares" (p. 168). Noting, with C. S. Lewis (1954, p. 94), how often in Dunbar "the comic overlaps with the demonic and terrifying," Bawcutt

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(1989) argues that Dunbar's treatment of the uncanny (*eirich*) differs from that of other Scots writers: "The *eirick* is harnessed and put to some purpose, though this is not always or primarily a moral one. . . . Dunbar's characteristic tone is not genial, but dark and sinister; we are told that God laughed 'his haift sair' at Kitok's exploits, and also at the Highlander, but in Dunbar's poems the only laughter (apart from the poet's) is that of devils (*Festivis Eris in Hell*, 29 [the present poem], and *Renunce Thy God*, 39 ["The Devil's Inquest" — poem 79]). It is not faerie that predominates in his comic poems, but diablerie" (p. 165).

In the brief interlude that occupies the center of the poem, Mahoun now calls for a Highland pageant. But the great rabble of Gaelic speakers who appear make such a terrible racket that Mahoun consigns them to the deepest pit of Hell where they are smothered in smoke. This section is clearly intended to satirize Highlanders, but it also serves to introduce the lighter comic tone that prevails in the second half of the poem. As a third entertainment Satan calls for a tournament between a tailor and a shoemaker who have been elevated to knightly status for the occasion. Their "joust itself" is broad excremental farce, with the tailor sliding from his saddle leaving it 'all beschtittin' when he comes near the soutar, whose horse is so alarmed at the rattle of the armour that it carries its rider to the Devil. [The Devil] wants no more of the soutar's vomit, so he turns his backside on the new-made knight and befoals him from neck to heel, striking horse and rider to the earth with a tremendous fart" (Ross, p. 175). This section of the poem belongs to the same comic tradition that produced such works as Chaucer's Sir Thopas and the ME *Tournament of Todenham*, works that intentionally burlesque popular romance tradition. The poem contains twenty stanzas: eighteen are 12-line stanzas of the tail-rhyme variety rhyming *aabccbdbebb*, and two are 6-line stanzas rhyming *aabccb*. Only B contains all three sections as a continuous sequence; MF contains two versions; R's text copies the first of the MF versions; A contains only the Tournament section. Mc57 and Mc58, K52A and K52B, Bw47.

- 1      *Of Februar the fyfthe nyct.* Scholars debate whether 15 February possesses symbolic significance or whether it is the date of an actual dream. If the latter, then it might be possible to date the composition of the poem, since Easter Eve (or Shrove Tuesday) was the day before the beginning of Lent. In "The Thistle and the Rose" (Poem 30) the poet's dream vision is also linked to a specific date, in that case 9 May. In both poems, though, Dunbar may simply be imitating Chaucer, who had provided a specific date for his dream experience in *HF*, line 63.
- 2-3     This is the time of night that visionary experiences in dream poems often occur — just a few hours before dawn. The dreamer's trance-like state is the state of semi-consciousness in which literary visions usually occur.

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- 4 Medieval literature abounds with visions of Heaven and Hell — from the masterpieces of Dante and the *Pearl*-poet, to comic and parodic pieces such as Chaucer's Prologue to The Summoner's Tale. Dunbar's poem is very much in the latter tradition. In this poem we hear nothing about Heaven but a great deal about Hell.
- 6 *Mahomme*. This shortened form of the name of the Muslim prophet Mohammad was often used to signify Satan or the Devil. Compare "The Antichrist" (Poem 51), line 32, and *The Treatis of the Twa Marit Women and the Widow* (Poem 84), line 101.
- 7 Although this is primarily a comic poem, it should be noted that the sinners in Hell who must join in the dance are people who died without being shriven, that is, while still in a state of sin because they were unconfessed. The Lenten season, which follows Shrove Tuesday, was the spiritual preparation for the act of confession, and this is the central point of Dunbar's several religious poems that focus on Lent. Compare "A Ballad of the Friar of Tangland" (Poem 54), line 46, and its accompanying note.
- 8 *Easternis Eve*. Eastern Eve is synonymous with Shrove Tuesday, the final day of carnival before the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday. At the court of James IV, Eastern Eve was marked by celebrations involving dancing, masquerading, and mock jousting. Fradenburg notes that "the king had sumptuous robes made for himself, so we know that the court participated in its own disguisings as well as patronized professional and municipal entertainments" (p. 175).
- 10 *gallants*. Dunbar refers to young men of the court as gallants, i.e., sycophants always up on the latest fashions. Yet also here he addresses his courtly audience with a warning — there is a very different kind of aristocracy in Hell. Mary E. Robbins writes, "The force of the poet's communication here lies in the social standing of his audience, who are shown in this poem that the trappings of nobility have meaning only for the short span of man's earthly existence. In the next world, the deadly sins become courtiers, and craftsmen can be dubbed knights" (p. 147).
- gyis. Lit., "guise" or "disguising" — i.e., a masquerade.
- 11-12 The latest mode of French dancing is also made fun of in the opening verses of "A Dance in the Queen's Chamber" (Poem 56).

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- 14–15 Dunbar seems to be combining two traditions here: visions of Hell and Purgatory common to Dante's *Divine Comedy* and English works such as *The Vision of Tindale*, St. Patrick's *Purgatory*, *Avebury of Inuit*, etc.; and the *Danse Macabre* so popular in late medieval art as well as poetry. Traditionally the *Danse* has skeletons or fiends leading the procession, with people of various social stations, regardless of class, (i.e., those guilty of the seven deadly sins) being dragged along in the dance. For a discussion of the *Danse Macabre*, see Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 153–59.
- 16 The first of the personified figures of the Seven Deadly Sins is Pride, the mortal sin that provides the foundation for all the others. Compare Ecclesiasticus 10:14–15: "The beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God: Because his heart is departed from him that made him: for pride is the beginning of sin." Mary E. Robbins notes that the order of the dancing of the sins is Gregorian, namely: Pride, Wrath, Envy, Covetousness, Sloth, Lechery, and Gluttony (p. 148). For the most thorough discussion of the seven deadly sins see Bloomfield.
- 17 With hair wyld bak and bonet on syd. Editors debate the literal meaning of this line and whether the text should read *hair* or *hair*. The point of the verse, in any case, seems to be to describe the vanity Pride takes in his appearance by his wearing his bonnet at a tilt and by displaying his hair. Chaucer's Pardoner comes to mind, who rode "Dischevelee, save his cappe" (i.e., "with unbound hair") and whose hair "his sholdres overspradde" (*CT II[A]683*, 677–78). See also The Parson's Tale, *CT X[I]410–15*.
- 19–21 *kethat*. The precise meaning of the term is not known, but the context indicates that it is an elaborate or luxurious garment. These verses recall the long, wide sleeves of the coat worn by Chaucer's Squire (*CT II[A]93*) as depicted in the Ellesmere MS portrait.
- 22 *proud trumper*. The phrase might also suggest "blowhards" or "self-proclaimers"—those who blow their own horns—in addition to the literal meaning, "impostor" or "trickster."
- 25–30 This is one of the poem's two 6-line stanzas.
- 27 *But yit hache nevir Mohoun*. This line points out indirectly to the audience that poems in this carnivalesque tradition are supposed to be funny in a grotesque way.

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One of the ways we learn not the emulate the Seven Deadly Sins is to laugh at their tomfoolery. Satan, however, seems to take himself and his ridiculous court all too seriously, indicating his excessive pride. See the headnote, above.

- 28–30 The appearance of priests within this company of the proud sinners greatly amuses the fiends, including the two who are named in line 30. The poet is probably inventing these names; note that he uses the obscure word *Bawzy* (line 30) in two other poems: "In a Secret Place" (Poem 72), line 38, and "To the King" (Poem 47), line 56. *Bawzy* is the name of a dog in Henryson's fable of the Cock and the Fox, *Fables*, line 546.
- 31–42 Wrath and his followers next join the dance; the emphasis in these verses is upon their weaponry and bellicosity.
- 33 *He branderist lyk a bear.* The image suggests an enraged bear being constrained by chains; bear-baiting was a common entertainment at this time in England and Scotland.
- 37 *In jakkar and stryppis and bonetis of stvll.* As Barritt notes, this seems to be a very current description of medieval armor (Bw 2.386).
- 38 *Thair leggis wer chevyeit to the heill.* This line probably means that they wore chains on their legs in order to constrain them, not that their legs were protected by chain mail, which the context might suggest.
- 43–54 In this depiction of Envy and his followers, the emphasis is upon a set of vices frequently practiced at court, as lines 53–54 directly state.
- 48 The phrase *windis quylte* ("white words") means statements that are insincere; it survives in the expression "little white lies." Compare Henryson's *Fables*, line 601, and Chaucer's TC 3.901.
- 54–66 The fourth of the Seven Deadly Sins is Covetousness, which in line 55 is called the root of all evil — compare 1 Timothy 6:10: *Radix enim omniis malorum est cupiditas* ("For the desire of money is the root of all evils"). The most striking aspects of these verses is in the way the punishment fits the crime (lines 61–66).
- 59 *Haudykeis.* Kinsley and Mackenzie gloss the term as "miser." I have followed Barritt's "skinflint," having already glossed "wrechis" (line 58) as "miser."

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- 61–66 Bawcutt observes that "Force-feeding with molten metal was one of the stock torments of hell . . . , but to swallow gold was peculiarly, and aptly, a punishment of the covetous" (Bw 2.386). Compare Henryson, *Obyssus*, line 330.
- 66 These avaricious sinners are repeatedly filled with the molten gold from every kind of coin they had sought to obtain during their lives.
- 67–78 Sloth enters fittingly in the manner of a sow, an animal traditionally associated with filth and laziness (see, for example, Chaucer's use of this image in his portrait of the Miller in *CT* II[A]556, and Whiting S541). Sloth appropriately arrives only at the second bidding (line 67); as has become increasingly clear throughout the poem, the Seven Deadly Sins personified exemplify the sins they represent. This kind of allegory is common in medieval poetry — and reaches its hilarious high point in *Piers Plowman* B.5.385–87: "Thanne cam Sleuthe al bislabered with two slamy eighen. / I moche sitte to be shryven or ellis sholde I happe; / I may nocht stonde ne stoupe ne withoute stool knelie." During confession Sloth falls asleep and Repentance has to wake him up sharply. The cartoon-like comedy of these representations helps to present them as creatures to be laughed at and ridiculed, not imitated.
- 70 *belly baddross*. Compare "In a Secret Place" (Poem 72), line 38.
- 74 Belial was believed to be the name of one of the devils, an assumption deriving from several passages of Scripture, especially 2 Corinthians 6:15: "And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (Compare also Judges 19:22 and 1 Kings [1 Samuel] 2:12.) Milton similarly associates Belial with the sin of Sloth when he describes him as "Timorous and slothful" in *Paradise Lost* 2.117.
- 75 *lawysie*. The term means "loins" but here may refer to the "rump."
- 76 Bawcutt notes that in Dante's *Purgatorio*, canto 18, "the slothful are forced to run incessantly" (Bw 2.387).
- 78 *cownysie*. Kinsley and Mackenzie note the obscurity of the term and leave it without gloss. *DOST* cites verb forms meaning "to take leave," or "have permission to leave." But such meanings do not illuminate the sense here. Bawcutt glosses the term as "dance," which I follow since it fits the context and suits well the "dance of the Seven Deadly Sins" topic.

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- 79–90 Lechery and his followers come next. While this sin was more commonly symbolized by a goat than a horse, the horse could also symbolize unbridled lust (as in The Reeve's Tale, CT II[A]4080–81). Compare also Jeremias 5:8: "They are become as amorous horses and stallions: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife." Here, too, the punishment in lines 88–90 is designed to fit the crime.
- 84 The poet reiterates the point that these are people who died in a state of sinfulness.
- 86–87 Kinsley suggests that their strange red countenances imply that they are suffering from sexually-related skin diseases (p. 339). In any case, the lines recall the "fyr-red cherabynnes face" of Chaucer's Summoner (CT II[A]624). Blawcatt notes that the simile in line 87 "evokes not merely colour but torment" (Bw 2.387).
- 91–102 The final sin is Gluttony and, as is often the case, the emphasis here is as much or more on excessive drinking as it is on overeating.
- 102 *livery*. A "livery," an allotment of food and drink on which one could live.
- 103–08 In stark contrast to Heaven, Hell lacks music and musicians and is a place of cacophony and disharmony. The only exception is the occasional murderous minstrel who earns himself a place there.
- 107–08 Bawcatt suggests that there is "a legal joke" here in the phrase *bref of richt* (line 108), a writ by which property descended to its rightful heir (Bw 2.338). In this case the property the murderer rightfully deserves to inherit is Hell itself.
- 109–20 This stanza provides a transition from the first half of the poem, with its frightening dance of the Seven Deadly Sins and their attendants, to the second half of the poem, with its farcical jousting between a tailor and a shoemaker. As Dunbar does elsewhere, here he ridicules Highlanders and speakers of Gaelic.
- 110 *Makfadyane*. Likely to be a type-name for a Highlander, though it may carry certain historical resonances as well. In Blind Harry's *Wallace*, for example, the hero wages a campaign against a fictional traitor of this name (ed. McDiarmid, 7.626–868).
- 111 "Northward" is probably used to indicate that Macfaydyane is a Highlander, but perhaps also to suggest that he comes from the woest part of Hell; that is, since north is the Devil's direction, the northern part of Hell would be the most hellish of all. Compare CT III[D]1413, *Piers Plowman* C.1.110–21, and *Death and Life*, lines

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- 142–50; compare also Jeremias 6:1: "for evil is seen out of the north, and a great destruction."
- 113–14 The joke here is that Hell seems to be teeming with these *Erschemon* — just as Hell in the Prologue to The Summoner's Tale is teeming with friars.
- 115 In ME works, "Termagant" is a name sometimes used for a Muslim deity believed to be one of Satan's minions. Here, used in the plural, it simply means "fiends" or "demons." Minor devils were customarily depicted as wearing ragged, tattered garb. Compare the *Flyting* (Poem 83), line 532, and Henryson's *Annunciation*, line 68.
- 116–20 These verses treat speakers of Gaelic derisively. In order to shut them up, the Devil has to smother them with snake.
- 117 Bawcutt notes that the verb *rowp* was often used to describe the croaking of ravens. Compare Holland's *Howlur*, line 215, and Lindsay's *Papyengo*, line 661 (Bw 2.388).
- 119 "The deepest pit of Hell" is the bottomless pit of Apocalypse 20:3.
- 121–23 These lines, opening the second section of the poem, recall "every tail-rhyme romance one has ever encountered" (Mary E. Robbins, p. 149). Dusbar is highly conscious here of the genre he is attempting to undercut. Compare *Sir Perceval of Galles* and, especially, Chaucer's Tale of Sir Thopas.
- 125 *A pricklong and ane hobbell clowtar*. These are probably contemptuous terms for a tailor and a cobbler, though their literal meanings and their implications are debated; puns may be involved also.
- 127–32 The tailor, along with his "graceless" supporters, is now led to the tournament field.
- 130–31 These are the tailor's apprentices, each of whom specializes in a particular task (some of which are unclear).
- 133–36 The ludicrous battle standard that is carried before the tailor reflects both his trade and his dishonesty. Comic banners of this sort are also carried by peasants in *Collebie Sow*, lines 330–32.
- 137–38 "For as long as the Greek Sea ebbs and flows, / Tailors will never be honest" — in other words, always. Gibes at dishonest tradesmen were common; compare Whiting

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T13. "The Greek Sea" was a common medieval phrase for the Mediterranean Sea; e.g., see CT 3(A)59; Hay's *King Alexander*, lines 1110 and 2607; and Gower's *Confessio Amantis* 1.145 and 3.2488.

- 142–44 In romances kings often bestowed knighthood upon aspiring young heroes just before their participation in a great tournament.
- 148–56 An arranged fight between a pair of cowards is a common comic device; Shakespeare uses it to good effect in *Twelfth Night* 3.4.
- 157–59 As Hawcutt notes, the shoemaker comes from the west because he is the designated defender in the joust. The challenger, in this case the tailor, approaches from the east (Bw 2.389). For the intricate rules for conducting such arranged combats in late medieval Scotland, see "The Order of Combats," a document executed under the direction of King James I of Scotland and based on Thomas of Woodstock's French "Order of Battel." Woodstock's text, along with an early translation of it into English, is provided in *The Black Book of the Admiralty*, ed. Travers Twiss, Rolls Series 55 (London: Longman, 1871; rpt. Lessing-Druckerei: Kraus Reprint, Ltd., 1965), 1.301–29. The text of the Scots "Order of Combats" can be found in George Neilson's *Trial by Combat* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1891), pp. 261–72; for the specific details utilized here, see especially p. 263.
- 164 *Sanct Girnega*. The general view is that this is probably a mock-saint or perhaps the name of a devil. It is not the name of the patron saint of shoemakers, which was St. Crispin.
- 168 The uly that bursts out between the plates in the cobbler's harness is the blacking or cobbler's oil used in his trade.
- 169–80 Just as the Devil had knighted the tailor, now he knights the shoemaker. And just as the tailor's fear produced his "series of farts like thunder" (line 155), the shoemaker's fear leads him to vomit all over himself and the Devil as well.
- 193 This alliterating line recalls the stirring battle descriptions often found in ME alliterative works, such as the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* or *Perceval of Galles*.
- 198–208 This time the Devil anticipates the shoemaker's "spewing." He not only manages to avoid being hit, but he uses his own *ars* (line 203) to launch a counterattack, which effectively ends the tournament. Mary E. Robbins notes that, for a poem

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warning its readers about the dangers and torments of Hell, it seems "mild by medieval standards" (p. 145) when the most graphically described pain is the shoemaker's besetting of himself. Certainly the Hell torments of a poem like the *Vision of Tondale* (see, for example, lines 762-75) are much more frightening than this mock tournament. However, Durbar is specifically invoking this tradition simply by his subject matter.

- 211-16 The Devil now strips the two jousters of their knightly status, bars them from further participation in warfare, and returns them to their previous status — something they themselves prefer.
- 227 air. Perhaps literally "heir," i.e., the inheritor or owner, though a pun on meanings of "air" or "breath" or "wind," thus referring to the power and stench of his prodigious farting, is hard to deny.
- 228 Schirris. The speaker addressing his audience as "Sirs" reflects the device known as "the minstrel call"; it often occurs at the beginning and/or end of a sub-section in a popular romance. It might also suggest that the poem was publically performed during a Easter Eve celebration.

### *78. Of the Tailors and the Shoemakers [Telyoarts and sowtaris, blist be ye]*

Here, with tongue in cheek, the poet retracts his highly uncomplimentary depiction of tailors and shoemakers in the jousting section of the previous poem. But this mock-commendation — which is essentially the same device he uses in the second of his two poems concerning James Dog ("Of the Aforesaid James Dog" [Poem 58]) — is obviously intended to extend the joke. In this case the narrator's dream vision turns from hellish concerns to heavenly ones, as an angel comes and announces to tailors and shoemakers that their place in Heaven will surpass the saints and be next to God Himself. They merit such an exalted position, he says, because they are the ones who correct God's mistakes. The poem is "notable for its irreverence, word-play . . . , and a kind of crazy logic that transforms rogues into saints" (Bw 2.391). Ten 4-line stanzas rhyming abab. B and MF. Mc59, K52C, Bn48.

- 1 "Between twelve o'clock and eleven," i.e., in the middle of the night. The odd inversion of the hours may have been necessitated by the rhyme, but it also effectively serves to introduce the topsy-turvy "logic" that operates throughout the poem.

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- 2-3 Compare Apocalypse 1:1.
- 4 *Telyoaris and rowtaris, blist be ye.* Bawcutt suggests that the refrain "humorously recalls the Beatitudes" (Bw 2.392), especially Matthew 5:3. The word *blist* literally means "blessed"; but when used sarcastically, the word could also convey the opposite sense of "cursed" or "accursed."
- 5-8 This stanza is not found in the text of MF, perhaps because of its irreverence.
- 9 *The casis to yow is nocht askens.* This verse implies that tailors and shoemakers are fully cognizant of the vitally important role they play in tidying up God's little mistakes.
- 11 *crafis.* The word means "skill," but may also carry overtones of "craftiness."
- 17 *fair.* The word may refer to actual fairs held on particular saints days, though more likely it is used here as a metaphor for life in this world; compare "This world is sis but a chiefe feire" in the lyric "Bi a wode as I gone ride," contained in the Vernon MS (JMEF 563, line 85). This is the only known occurrence of the word *fyrof*, and thus the context offers the main clue to its meaning — a person with deformed feet?
- 20 *Bor ye can byd them, blist be ye.* A central irony of the poem is reflected in this verse: the tailors and shoemakers do not actually correct any of these deformities, all they do is hide them. There seems to be an implication that what they are doing is covering up the truth.
- 31 *crafis slye.* The phrase effectively captures the double meaning the poet hints at throughout the poem — "skillful artistry" and "sly deceptions."
- 39 *Anouis.* The word is also double in meaning — "servants" but also "rogues."

79. *The Devil's Inquest [Renance thy God and com to me]*

Two widely differing versions of this poem are extant, and editors agree that it is "likely that neither version represents a finished poem; there are inconsistencies and clumsinesses in both, and in both some stanzas may have been interpolated" (K., p. 348). Bawcutt prints both versions on opposing pages, thus facilitating a comparison of the two texts. The poem itself is a nightmarish dream vision in which the narrator observes the Devil as he moves through

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the daily marketplace inciting a variety of dishonest people to utter self-damning oaths. Kinsley takes the refrain "Renunce thy God and cum to me," to be the poem's title; Mackenzie calls it "The Devil's Inquest." Both titles make sense: the poem's lengthy catalogue of society begins with a priest and a courtier, but the major emphasis of the satire is on the lesser varieties of merchants and craftsmen, again including tailors and shoemakers, who loudly but falsely proclaim their honesty. The central motif here is the common belief that the swearing of false or blasphemous oaths jeopardizes the soul of the swearer. Thus the poem has some affinity to Chaucer's Friar's Tale and Pardoner's Tale. B; a substantially different version occurs in MF and R. Seventeen 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabbA*. Me42, K56, Bw78.

- 1–2 These verses establish a dream-vision framework, but aside from the use of the phrase *Me shocht* in lines 2, 5, and 81, the dreamer has little significance, and there is no return to the opening frame at the end of the poem.
- 2–5 The Devil moves surreptitiously through the city marketplace, planting in the people a desire to utter "oaths of cruelty." This phrase reflects the common belief that when people swear on the body of Christ they reenact Christ's torments on the Cross. Compare, for example, the actions of the three tavern rioters in Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale, who "many a grisly ooth thanne han they sworn, / And Cristes blessed body they torente" (CT VI[C]708–09). There is probably the additional sense that their oaths will also lead to the cruelty they will experience in Hell as a result of having sworn such oaths.
- 5 *Renunce thy God and cum to me.* "The refrain inverts the baptismal renunciation of the devil and all his works" (Bw 2.475).
- 7–8 The priest, symbolizing hypocrisy, takes God's name in vain — thus violating one of the Ten Commandments — while at the same time he is receiving God (in the form of the Host) at the altar.
- 9 "Thow art my clerk," the Devil can say. See Bawcutt on the ties between this poem and the Book of Job. "The figure of the devil is at the heart of Dunbar's poem" (1989, p. 169). See headnote to "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins" (Poem 77) on Dunbar's diablerie.
- 11–13 The courtier represents the sin of pride. He swears by Christ's wounds and arms, two very common oaths. Compare CT VI[C]654.

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- 17 "Relinquished his portion of Heaven or Hell," i.e., expressed his disbelief in the existence of an afterlife.
- 21–23 The goldsmith claims, falsely, that his materials are so expensive that he cannot turn a profit. His asseveration in line 23 is similar to that spoken by the summoner in *The Friar's Tale*: "the fode feend me fecolle / If I th' excuse" (*CT* III[D]1610–11). Compare also Lindsay's *Satyre*, lines 4166–71.
- 29 *Mahoue*. A shortened form of "Mohammad," it was often used as a synonym for the Devil. Compare "The Antichrist" (Poem 51), line 32; "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins" (Poem 77), line 6; and *The Tretir of the Twa Marit Women and the Beado* (Poem 84), line 101.
- 37 *evne and od.* "Even and odd," a common idiom meaning "everything."
- 41 *be the sacrament*. I.e., on Christ's body, the sacrament of Holy Communion. Compare Lindsay's *Satyre*, lines 652 and 1541.
- 46–49 The malt-maker, or maltster, prepared the malt which would then be used by the brewer; malt was normally made from barley in a process that involved steeping, germinating, and then drying in a kiln.
- 51–54 The brewer criticizes the quality of the malt in order to pay less for it. A *boll* (a standard measurement — line 54) of malt should normally produce about twelve gallons of ale.
- 56 *Be rade and ruyp*. It was common to swear by the Cross. The "rope" may refer to the scourge used to beat Christ or perhaps to the rope by which He was bound to the pillar.
- 61 Beginning with the minstrel, the social catalogue focuses on the more disreputable members of society.
- 66–69 Dicing and swearing are often closely linked; see Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale (*CT* VII[C]651–55). Compare also the phrase "false as dicers' oaths" in *Hamlet* 3.4.45.
- 71–74 The precise meaning of the thief's words are debated, but he seems to be swearing that if he can escape hanging now, he is willing to be possessed by Hell later. In line 74 the Devil seems to agree, welcoming the thief to his "nope."

### *Explanatory Notes to Poem 80*

- 76 Fishwives were notoriously noisy and argumentative. (Compare "To the Merchants of Edinburgh" [Poem 75], lines 10–11 and the *Flyting* [Poem 83], line 231.) Later the term "fishwife" came to stand for any coarse, abusive woman.
- 82 *Soldisand weir an heit shik.* Compare the description in the Prologue to The Summoner's Tale: "Right so as bees out swarmen from an hyve, / Out of the develes ers ther gonne dryve / Twenty thousand fiotes on a route" (*CT III[D]1693–95*).
- 84 Robin and Dick — stock names for two everyday fellows — rather like "Tom, Dick, and Harry."

### **80. Master Andro Kennedy's Testament**

The poem is a mock-testament in which the speaker, lying on the brink of death, proposes a final disposition for his possessions (stanzas 3–12) and then describes the funeral and burial he wishes to receive (stanzas 12–14). He consigns his soul to his lord's wine cellar; his body to the midden heap in Ayr; his unfaithful heart to his special friend (or his wife?); his most valued possession to the head of his clan (though he does not know who that would be); his false pleasures to the master of St. Anthony's; his false winnings to the friars; his folly to Jock Fool; and his curse and God's to John Clerk. His remaining goods, and the care of his children, he gives to his lord. The poem satirizes many things but chiefly the speaker himself, who makes no effort to conceal the fact that he is an incorrigible drunk.

It is not clear if *Andro Kennedy* was a real person or a made-up figure meant to satirize the Kennedys, a prominent family in the royal burgh of Ayr. Some scholars have argued that Andro Kennedy was a quack doctor much favored at court, but there is little external evidence to support that claim, and the evidence within the poem is not especially compelling. It is possible that the speaker is meant to be an Augustinian canon belonging to the monastic house of St. Anthony's in Leith (see lines 57–64). If so, the poem should be viewed primarily as a piece of anti-clerical satire about a drunken clergyman rather than as an attack upon the Kennedys. It is not certain how many of the people mentioned in the poem are real, though some of them (particularly the master of St. Anthony's) probably are.

The literary genre of the mock-testament was in much in vogue in France in the later Middle Ages (Villon's *Grond Testament* is a major example), and Scottish literature of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century preserves several examples, including King Hart, Lindsay's *Testament of Papyongo* and *Testament of Squyer Meldrum*, and the anonymous *Duncan Loideus' Testament*. Fourteen 8-line stanzas, rhyming ababab, ababca, or ababacac; the final stanza contains fourteen lines rhyming ababacacacac. RP, B, MF, and R. Mc40, K38, Bw19.

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- 1-8 The speaker proudly offers a commentary on his dubious lineage. He considers himself to be a fiend incarnate, having been sired either by an incubus demon or by a lecherous friar, sentiments recalling the opening verses in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* (CT III[D]873-81). (If he were a foundling who had been raised in a monastic house, a common phenomenon in the Middle Ages, he would not be certain who had fathered him.)
- 2 The Latin tags interspersed throughout the text are both made up and drawn from specific sources, sometimes passages of Scripture; they are designed to lend a "serious" and "legalistic" coloration to this ludicrous performance. They reflect the kind of Latin that a rather unstudious cleric (such as Chaucer's Monk) might be able to produce.
- 3 *sum incubus*. An incubus was a demonic being who liked to seduce mortal women. Compare the description of the birth of Merlin in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* (Thorpe, pp. 167-69). Compare also "The Antichrist" (Poem 51), lines 26-30, and *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), line 125.
- 9-12 These are moralistic commonplaces. Blind Allan is probably not an actual person; and not knowing any more about something "than Blind Allan does of the moon" was probably a common colloquial expression. Compare Lindsay's *Beaton*, line 396.
- 15-16 Firmly, given his alcoholic predilections, Andro Kennedy's dying wish is for his mouth to be wet with drink; he is much less concerned, apparently, with the administration of Last Rites. Bawcutt suggests the Latin phrase is a "flippant rewriting of the common formula to attest sanity: *egre corpore sanus fons meus*, 'sick in body, but sound in mind'" (Bw 2.329).
- 17 At this point the speaker begins his actual testament, which continues until line 94.
- 18-24 The speaker consigns his soul to his lord's wine cellar, there to remain until the Day of Judgment. This obliquely touches upon an interesting point of medieval theology — the matter of where the soul resides until the body and soul are once again united for the final judgment. The speaker has his own unique ideas on this matter, at least as it pertains to himself.
- 20 *into my lordis wyne cellar*. Perhaps this verse alludes to Canticle of Canticles 2:4.

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- 24 Sweet Cuthbert has never been identified, and most commentators believe he is a taverner or a cellar-keeper. If the speaker is a member of a monastic house, then very likely Cuthbert would be the cellarer, the official in charge of overseeing the wine cellar. Cuthbert, the name of a celebrated northern British saint, whose shrine is at Durham, would be a fitting name for a monastic official. In Chaucer, the saint's name carries a derogatory sexual connotation (cut beard = have sex) as John swears to Simkin "by Scint Cuthbert" before swiving the Miller's wife in *The Reeve's Tale* (C7 II[A]4127).
- 24–32 There is no love lost between the speaker and Cuthbert, since Cuthbert keeps a careful watch over the cellar and knows the kind of fellow Andro is.
- 32 *bed of stait*. The bed of a great lord or lady, which would be hung with costly, lavishly decorated fabrics.
- 33–40 He stipulates that he wants his body to be buried, not in a churchyard, but in the refuse heap outside the town of Ayr, where the leavings of food and drink might be thrown over his face.
- 36 Ayr, in the county of Ayrshire in the southwest of Scotland was, like Aberdeen, a royal burgh. The Kennedys were one of Ayr's most prominent families.
- 41–48 In the previous two stanzas Andro consigned his soul and his body to their final resting places, and here he consigns his heart. But who is his "consort Jacob" to whom he gives his faithless heart? Burcett suggests it is either his mistress or his wife (interpreting *Jacobe* as the dative form of *Jacoba*) (Bw 2.330). But if it is his wife, why would she not retain the guardianship of his children (lines 91–92)? Are they illegitimate? Perhaps Jacob is a monastic brother with whom Andro had (at least ostensibly) a close friendship.
- 49–56 The *best aschē* (line 49) is a person's most valuable possession, to be claimed by the head of one's family upon one's death. The problem here is that Andro does not know who that is, for the matter of his family origins, as the first stanza indicated, is quite murky.
- 46 Compare Jeremiah 9:6.
- 50 The Latin here does not pause, but the sense seems to be a gloss on the lines before and after the phrase. *Coupe* refers to the Highland custom of paying tribute to one's

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head of kin. Bawcutt notes that the practice "was abolished by Parliament in 1490, but persisted into the late sixteenth century" (Bw 2.330).

- 51–52 The sense is: "but I no more know / Who that is than I would put a curse on my own head."
- 53–56 The lord he openly claims as his earthly lord is presumably the head of the Kennedy family. He says that they are as alike as two similar kinds of sieves, or as two trees that grow in the same forest — but no one else shares his opinion (line 54). "Kennedy is the sort of person who boasts, without justification, of being related to great men" (Bw 2.330).
- 57–64 This stanza contains a direct attack upon "William, the master of St. Anthony's" — a man who never tells lies except when the holly is green! (Compare Whiting H417.) William Gray has not been identified, but it seems unlikely that so specific an identification would have been fabricated.
- 65–72 All of his falsity he leaves to the friars, who are portrayed as masters of deceit and hypocrisy. Dunbar's attitude toward the friars is consistently negative and hostile; compare especially "Tidings from the Session" (Poem 74), lines 45–49, and "How Dunbar Was Desired to Be a Friar" (Poem 76) in its entirety.
- 68 Compare Psalm 111:9 in the Vulgate.
- 73–80 *Jok Fule* (Jock Fool) receives Andro's foolishness, for Andro is a bigger fool than Jok. Indeed, *Jok Fule* is only pretending to be a fool, to his considerable profit. Dunbar may or may not have had a specific fool in mind. In *The Miller's Tale* Alison refers to Absolom as "Jakke fool" (CT 4[A]3708).
- 79 i.e., "pulls the wool over my lord's eye."
- 81–88 John Clerk has not been identified; the term *master* (line 81) might refer either to his degree of education or to his clerical position. Compare "The Lament for the Makars" (Poem 14), line 58.
- 84 One wonders why this man is said to be the cause of Andro's death.
- 88 This is a much-debated line; perhaps it completes the dog and swine metaphor of the previous verses. The dog's teeth are writing all over the swine's body — writing

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without stopping (i.e., without a fixed day — *zive de*), or without including a single "d" (*de*) in the text.

- 89–92 Everything else, including his children, will go into the care of his lord — who perhaps in this case is his immediate superior in the monastery, if the speaker belongs to one. His children pose an interesting problem. Very possibly *Ade* and *Kyne* and "all the others" are illegitimate. (*Ade* was a nickname for Adam, *Kyne* for Katherine.)
- 93–116 The funeral Andro desires is much more in keeping with the Celtic tradition of the wake than with normal Christian burial.
- 101 *playand cop out*. Playing "empty the cup" may or may not refer to a specific drinking game. Compare "To the King" (Poem 40), line 13.
- 104 Compare Psalm 101:10 in the Vulgate — "For I did eat ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping."
- 106 This famous Latin phrase comes from the Office for the Dead.
- 110 The "ale wisp" is what in Chaucer is called "the bush" or the "ale stake." It is the small bundle of straw that is displayed when an alehouse is open for business.
- 116 This final Latin phrase, taken from the burial service, derives from Job 10:8–9. Compare also Psalm 118:73 in the Vulgate.

### **81. Dunbar's *Dirge***

This comic and parodic poem consists of two main sections. Lines 1–28 are an introductory letter in which the speaker urges the king and his courtiers to free themselves from the pain and purgatorial bleakness of Stirling and return to the heavenly bliss of Edinburgh. What then follows is Dunbar's "dirge," an elaborate parody of the Office of the Dead, used here to commemorate the released soul's journey to the joy and bliss of the divine court of Heaven. The poem is dominated by two themes. One is the comic comparison between the cities of Edinburgh and Stirling, with Stirling coming off much the worse. The other is the clever parody of religious ritual and the liturgy, a medieval literary tradition more frequently encountered among Latin works than vernacular ones. According to Bawcutt, "Dunbar simulates the striking threefold structure of Matins of the Dead, which in its full form consisted

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of three nocturnes, each of which contained three lessons and three psalms. He does not parody the lessons, drawn from the book of Job, but substitutes prayers of his own invention; he also devises three responsories, whose metrical form recalls the *repetenda*, or repeated short phrases, common in responsories. The poem is also punctuated by the liturgical formulae *Habe dominum et Tu ostent*" (Bw 2.490).

Commentators have offered a good deal of speculation about the poem's historical context. James IV made frequent visits to Stirling for a variety of reasons. It is well-known that James had a mistress in Stirling, but he also often made a Lenten retreat to the friary of the Observant Franciscans, a religious house that he himself had founded near Stirling. That might accord well with the poem's references to hermits and to the meagerness of the food and drink at Stirling. On the other hand, the reference to Yule in line 89 suggests that the season may be fall, not spring, which would link the poem more to the liturgical season of Advent than to Lent. The poem is primarily in octosyllabic couplets, with interspersed triplets. MF, B, and R. Mc30, K22, Bw84.

- 3      *Commendir ar.* A formula commonly used at the beginning of letters, meaning "recommend ourselves," i.e., "we send greetings."
- 6      *Striving.* An earlier spelling of Stirling; the rhyme sounds in lines 98–101 provide evidence for the pronunciation.
- 9–18     These verses may refer to the simple lives of the friars with whom the king is in residence; or they may be wholly ironic, alluding to the fact that the king is actually enjoying himself a great deal. One of the well-known reasons for his trips to Stirling was to visit his mistress Margaret Drummond.
- 18      *stok and stone.* Literally, "stamps and stones," but a common phrase, especially in Lydgate (see *Fall of Princes* lines 2834–35; *Rexson and Semualite*, line 6411, and various minor works), meaning lifeless things or desolate countryside; compare Henryson's *Orpheus*, line 179. See also *Pearl*, line 380, *Cleanness*, lines 1344, 1522, and 1720; TC 3.589, *Sir Orfeo*, line 332, and romances such as *Sir Firembras*, line 201, and the *Awowyng of Arthur*, line 187.
- 23      *dirige.* The first word of the opening antiphon at Matins for the Office of the Dead — *Dirige, Deus meus, in conspectu tuo via meam* ("Direct, O God, my way in Your sight").
- 30      *Misit.* The "Blessed Virgin" is a common epithet for Mary.

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- 31 The angels of Heaven were traditionally grouped into nine orders, beginning with the angels and archangels. Compare "On the Nativity of Christ" (Poem 1), lines 9–10, and the notes to those lines.
- 38 Pious phrases such as these are often found at the end of works as benedictions. Compare Lindsay's *Squire Meldrum*, line 1593, and *CT II[A]174* and *VII[B<sup>7</sup>]3320*.
- 39 *Tu autem, Domine*. This abbreviation of the liturgical formula is from the daily service of Matins, as *Tu autem Domine misere te nobis*, "Do Thou, O Lord, have mercy on us," is the *Iube Domine* of line 44. See Bw 2.490 and 2.491n39, as well as Bawcutt (1992), pp. 200–01, for discussion of the liturgical formula, which would normally precede and follow each lesson.
- 47–48 This brief catalogue lists those ranking highest in Heaven. The patriarchs are the founding fathers of Israel from the book of Genesis, figures such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the prophets would include Old Testament figures such as Daniel, Isaías, and Jeremias. Line 48 reflects a threefold classification of saints into martyrs, confessors, and holy virgins.
- 58 Bawcutt notes that financial records show how popular the wines of Anjou were in Scotland (Bw 2.492).
- 62 The great parish church of Edinburgh was dedicated to St. Giles, making him an appropriate saint to invoke in the desire to bring the king back to the city. His September 1 feast day was celebrated with processions through the city. Bawcutt (Bw 2.492) notes: "St. Giles was believed to have special power in obtaining forgiveness for sinners, because of his successful intercession for Charlemagne" (see *The Golden Legend* 5.84–85).
- 70 *sternit servit*. Here the phrase refers to the spheres of the seven moveable "stars"—the five visible planets and the sun and the moon. The saints in Heaven would dwell in the highest Heaven (the *coelum empyreum*), located above the seven spheres of the planets, the eighth sphere of the fixed stars (the zodiac), and the ninth sphere known as the *primum mobile*.
- 78 The Archangel Gabriel was traditionally viewed as God's primary messenger (compare Daniel 9:21 and Luke 1:19, 26).
- 85–90 Compare Chaucer's *TC* 1.638–39.

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- 103-04 These verses parody some of the petitions contained in the *Pater Noster*, the Lord's Prayer.
- 112-13 This is the second verse of Psalm 101 in the Vulgate, which is found in some versions of the Office of the Dead (Bw 2.493).

**82. *The Twa Caunaris [This lang Lenten is makis me lese]***

This poem belongs to a minor comic genre in which carousing women, with drink-loosed tongues, speak derisively about their husbands. John Skelton's *The Tunning of Elynor Rummieg* and Dunbar's own *Tretis of the Twa Marit Wemen and the Wedo* (Poem 84) are the two most famous examples, but several others survive from late medieval literature (compare *MEF* 1362 and 1852). In the case of this poem, the satire is also directed at those who create flimsy excuses in order to avoid participating in the Lenten fast required of all Christians. The poem survives in four MS copies, the earliest being the one in the Aberdeen Minute Book. Six 5-line stanzas rhyming *aabbB*. Aberdeen, B, MF, and R, Mc46, K73, Bw57.

- 1-2 Ash Wednesday is the first day of the forty-day Lenten season that culminates on Easter Sunday. The joke is that the two gossips have begun to violate the Lenten fast within a few hours of its beginning. Although the drinking of wine was not totally forbidden during Lent (the eating of meat was forbidden), sobriety was the rule and abstinence the ideal.
- 2 caunaris. "Gossips" or "female confidants"; like the word "gossip," *caunaris* originally meant "godmother" but soon came to mean "close female friend."
- 5 It has not taken long for her to begin complaining about "the long Lenten season" — since it has only just begun.
- 7-8 Although the woman is "great and fat," she contends that observing the rigors of Lent will surely endanger her health, given her enfeebled physical condition.
- 9 *Just preif of thar.* I.e., "Just look at me — there's the proof." Compare Lindsay's *Satyre, Proclamation*, line 225.
- 13-14 Her mother's slenderness, her friend alleges, was due to her refined taste in wines — she restricted her drinking to the sweet, fortified wine called malmsey; it was an expensive, imported wine, the preference for people of style and estate. See the

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*Alliterative Morte Arthur*, line 236, and *Sir Degrevant*, line 1431. Bawcutt notes that "the boozy gossips of Noah's wife in play 3 of *The Chester Miracle Cycle* likewise prefer Malmsey to cheaper wine" (Bw 2.411).

- 18–19 There are two jokes here. The first is her advice that she should refrain from fasting (in Lent one refrains by fasting); and the second is that her husband should bear the burden of her refraining from fasting, causing him to experience the pain that a person should experience themselves during Lent.
- 23 The women's disparagement of their husbands' sexual prowess is a basic feature of this comic genre. Compare also May's appraisal of January's sexual performance in *The Merchant's Tale*: "She preysteth nat his pleyyng worth a bene" (CT IV [E]1854). Compare Whiting B92.
- 24 Compare *The Debate of the Carpenter's Tools*, lines 229–32.
- 29 "By which to mend they had great hope" — by forcing themselves to do all this drinking, they have high hopes of alleviating their debilitating leanness.
- 30 As he often does, Dunbar slightly alters the final refrain, signaling the end of the poem.

### *83. The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

If *The Tretis of the Twa Marit Women and the Wedo* (Poem 84) is Dunbar's most sexually explicit poem, *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* is his most scatologically explicit poem, what one critic, Tom Scott, has amusingly called "the most repellent poem . . . in any language" (p. 175). In contrast to all the other poems in this volume, however, the *Flyting* cannot be attributed exclusively to Dunbar, for Walter Kennedy, one of Dunbar's contemporaries, probably composed 328 of the poem's 552 verses. It is possible, in fact, that the poem was intended as a public entertainment, perhaps one in which the two contesting poets actually performed their parts before the court of James IV. Modern critical response to the poem has varied widely. Some readers and critics find the *Flyting* offensive — as much for its social attitudes as for its scatology — but others consider it to be one of the great comic poems of the later Middle Ages. Somewhat surprising, perhaps, is the fact that although the poem contains much that is coarse and vulgar, it appears to have been very well received throughout the sixteenth century. It was one of a small number of Dunbar's poems to appear in an early

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printed text; its text appears in both B and MF, and it inspired several imitations from Dunbar's Scottish successors (see *Bw* 2.428).

The genre of the *Flyting* has been much discussed, and scholars cite a wide range of possible influences and literary precursors. The poem clearly shares some of the basic characteristics of the medieval debate poem in that it is a verbal sparring match in which each speaker tries to demonstrate the superiority of his views to those of his opponent. In this poem, however, the main point seems to be not so much for each contestant to demonstrate the superiority of his views as it is to demonstrate his superior talent at heaping comic abuse on the other while at the same time displaying his poetic virtuosity. It is possible, therefore, that the poem was a conscious attempt to revive the ancient Celtic tradition of a public "slanging contest" between court bards or satirists. In this respect, the poem provides "a striking example of how orality can shape a written text" (Robichaud, p. 10). Walter J. Ong comments on the agonistic nature of oral civilizations that so mark flytings.<sup>1</sup> Slanging contests are often mentioned in the early Irish and Welsh narratives; compare, for example, Taliesin's virtuoso performance at the court of Maelgwn Gwynedd in the Welsh "Tale of Taliesin" (*The Mabinogi and Other Welsh Tales*, trans. Patrick K. Ford [Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977], pp. 171–77). Also see "The Verse Debate between Dafydd ap Gwilym and Gruffydd Gryg" for another "slanging contest" between two well-known Celtic poets.<sup>2</sup> The technique of the *Flyting* relies on the additive rather than the subordinate for its effect, piling on insult upon insult. To a modern reader the effect "may seem overwrought and excessive, but in a residually oral culture, overstatement is a virtue if it is more memorable than plain presentation of opinion" (Robichaud, p. 11). The "cumulative nastiness" is created largely through alliterative combinations of adjective noun phrases using many reduplicative rhyming insults, puns, scatology, name calling, and verbal sexual assault.<sup>3</sup> As to the accuracy or directed purpose of

<sup>1</sup> *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 124–25. See also *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 43–44.

<sup>2</sup> *Dafydd ap Gwilym: The Poems*, trans. and commentary, Richard Morgan Loomis (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1982), pp. 263–76. The two poets take turns composing *cwydd* (one of the most popular verse forms in Welsh poetry) of seemingly minor obscenity compared to Dunbar. Dafydd, however, gets the last word in: "very great hatred, lord of terror, / Ass of a goose, withdraw from between me and the man" (p. 276). It is worth noting, perhaps, that, like Dunbar's tribute to Kennedy in "The Lament for the Makars" (Poem 14), Gruffydd also praised his former rival in his elegy "The Yew Tree above Dafydd's Grave" (Loomis, p. 288).

<sup>3</sup> Insult slinging is in general out of place in the deodorized confines of modern American life, though the tradition, celebrated in such Shakespearean moments as *Henry IV*'s battle of wits between Falstaff and Hal, does survive. For a modern comparable version of a poetic slanging contest, see Spielberg's

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the abuse each poet shovels on the other, see Scott (p. 176), Baxter (p. 67), and Bawcutt (1992, p. 7). Robinson, following Bawcutt, explains the insults as caricatures of sorts — severely exaggerated but accurate enough to be recognizable (p. 275).

Dunbar's *Flying* has a very simple structure. First there are two short sections in which the disputants exchange their initial challenges, and then there are two very lengthy sections in which each one takes a turn at reviling the other. In both cases Dunbar speaks first and Kennedy second, a pattern that would seem to give Kennedy something of an advantage. The opening verses in Dunbar's initial speech indicate that he is responding to something Kennedy and his colleague Quintin have previously said or written, but that may simply be a device by which to initiate the contest. The poem ends without any concluding materials other than the final rubric: "Juge ye now heir quha gat the wort" — "Judge you now here who got the wort."

Walter Kennedy, Dunbar's opponent in the *Flying*, was a member of a prominent Ayrshire family and a graduate of Glasgow University (1478). The Kennedy family's land holdings were primarily in Carrick (located in the southern part of Ayrshire) and in Galloway, areas which at this time were still primarily Gaelic-speaking. Kennedy had a wife and a son, so he was probably not a member of the priesthood, though he did come to hold important church positions at Douglas and at Glasgow. Like Dunbar he was also a poet, and Dunbar speaks affectionately of Kennedy in "Lament for the Makars" (Poem 14), lines 89–92, as do Douglas (*The Palis of Honour*, line 923) and Lindsay (*Papyrusgo*, lines 15–16). Here, though, Dunbar portrays him as being a poor, raggedy, thieving Gaelic band. Kennedy, on the other hand, portrays Dunbar as a dwarfish benefice-beggar belonging to a family with a long history of treachery to Scotland. Kennedy's vitriolic attack on Dunbar may allude to actual events in Dunbar's life, though the exaggerated nature of his scurrilous "exposé" requires scholars to be cautious in drawing any firm conclusions from Kennedy's remarks. For a fuller account of Kennedy and his family, see Bw 2.427.

One of the main points of the poem is to allow the two poets to display their poetic talents. Dunbar's verses tend to be wittier and tighter, perhaps, and to demonstrate his particular aptitude for clever wordplay. Kennedy's verses are more discursive and long-winded, and he seems intent on displaying his learnedness through the frequent use of literary allusions, some of which are quite obscure. Both poets end their performances with fairly similar grand finales, grand finales that in both cases contain a profusion of internal rhyme. But on the whole the styles and techniques of the two poets seem to differ fairly significantly, and there is little reason to accept Reiss' suggestion that Dunbar is actually the author of the entire poem (p. 55).

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*Hook*, in which Peter Pan and his opponent verbally battle each other for social leadership. While this flying does not include the scatological and sexual references (the film is directed toward a young audience), the point of the battle is the same — to heap insult after insult on the opponent and let the audience judge the winner. The film even occasionally shares some of the internal rhymes with Dunbar's *Flying*, as when Peter crows "You rude, crude, lewd piece of pre-chewed food!"

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The *Flying* contains 552 verses in 8-line stanzas, rhyming ababbcbc or ababbccb; 224 verses are attributed to Dunbar, and 328 verses are attributed to Kennedy. The text here presented is a composite, following Bawcutt: Lines 1–315 are based upon B; lines 316–552 are based upon CM, M6, K23, Bw65.

- 1      *Schir Joliane the Ros.* Dunbar is addressing Sir John the Ross, his close friend and possibly his sometime collaborator (compare Kennedy's remarks in lines 39–40); Ross is included among the poets whose deaths Dunbar mourns in "The Lament for the Makars" (Poem 14), line 83.
- 1–5     The poet claims to be responding to something (possibly a poem) written by Kennedy and Quintin in which they praise themselves at the expense of other poets. Little is known of Quintin, though he was probably Kennedy's kinsman and his collaborator. It is possible that he is the Quintyne Schaw included in the list of deceased poets in "The Lament for the Makars" (Poem 14), line 86. Bawcutt doubts that he is the same man as the "Quenesetyne" mentioned in line 37 of "Sir Thomas Noesy" (Poem 55).
- 1–24    The first three stanzas provide a context and a justification for the verbal warfare to come. In them Dunbar is apparently making a public pronouncement to Sir John Ross, his friend and kinsman, commenting on the general grievance he feels toward Kennedy and Quintin, who in their pride have elevated themselves to a status above the stars. Dunbar serves warning of what he might be forced to do if they were to speak negatively about him. Dunbar's threat provokes Kennedy to do just that — although one suspects that this was all done by pre-arrangement.
- 4–12    Bawcutt remarks on the mock apocalyptic tone which, though comic, is nonetheless, ominous. "No reader is disposed to laugh at the menacing figure of the devil in Dunbar's poem on the Resurrection" (1989, p. 165). Dunbar seems perpetually interested in the world of evil spirits and the uncertainty about their nature. N.b., the flying Abbot of Tungland or his references to Titivillus (Bawcutt, 1989, pp. 165–68).
- 6–7     Dunbar compares Kennedy's pride to that which caused Lucifer's fall; compare Isaías 14:12–14. See Whiting L587 and Lindsay, *Monarche*, lines 867–85.
- 9–15    The poet uses generalized apocalyptic imagery to suggest the catastrophic consequences of what he might write; these images do not have specific biblical sources, but compare verses such as Isaías 13:10–13 and Apocalypse 8:7–12.

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- 14     *The se could burn, the mone could thoill ecclippis.* Compare line 489; and compare also "Of a Black Moor" (Poem 71), line 13.
- 16     *So lond of eair the common bell could clynk.* This refers to the alarm bell sounded to warn the public of an impending disaster such as might be caused by fire or armed threat; but the verse seems to be intentionally ludicrous — in light of all that he has just described.
- 17-24    Dunbar initially indicates his reluctance to take part in any bardic flying contest (lines 17-21), probably to suggest his disdain toward such an unworthy and uncouth activity. He concedes, though, that he will participate if his opponents force him into it — thus placing the onus upon them. Compare Douglas, *Ecuador* 1.Prol.153, and Lindsay, *Complaint*, line 31.
- 25-48    Kennedy's response, also in three stanzas, balances Dunbar's opening statement and serves to conclude the introductory section of the poem. Dunbar has challenged Kennedy to throw down the verbal gauntlet, and Kennedy does not hesitate to do so.
- 25-26    The sense is: "Beshitten Dunbar, against whom do you make your boast, / Claiming the right to write such scabby scrolls (i.e., writings)?"
- 29     *Mandrag mymmerkin.* I.e., "dwarfish creature resembling a man"; this is the first of Kennedy's numerous references to Dunbar's dwarf-like stature. The mandrake is a European herb whose forked root was thought to resemble the body of a man. Compare John Donne's "get with child a mandrake root" ("Song," line 2).
- 29-30    These verses contain the first of Kennedy's several mocking references to Dunbar's university education. Here he claims that Dunbar was given a master's degree only as a scornful joke.
- 30     *Theyr scheild.* "Threiced shiled" or "peeled"; i.e., often exposed. "The phease is agricultural in origin" (Bw 2.431).
- 36     *Ignorant elf, ape, owl irregular.* This verse also ridicules Dunbar's physical appearance by likening him to an elf (a comment on his small stature) and to an ape and an owl (a comment on his ugliness).
- 37     *Skaldir skaitbird and commone skamvar.* Compare King *Berdok*, lines 26-27.

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- 38 *Wangfiskit* foundling that *Natour maid aye yre*. "A misbegotten foundling that Nature made a dwarf." The prefix *wan-* in the verb *wangfiskit* means "poorly" or "badly," and the second element in *wangfiskit* is the vulgar term it appears to be; compare "In a Secret Place" (Poem 72), line 13.
- 41–48 In the final stanza of his opening salvo, Kennedy urges Dunbar to stop the action he has initiated and to make recompense to Quintin for having slandered him. Otherwise, he says, Dunbar will rue the day he was born.
- 43 *walidrag*. The term, which can mean "undergrown," is one of Kennedy's many insulting references to Dunbar's small stature.
- 49 *Iersche brybour baird*. Before launching into a string of scurrilous invective, Dunbar first establishes Kennedy's professional identity — he is an Irish (i.e., Gaelic) "vagabond bard, a vile beggar in rags."
- 49–64 All of the verses in these rhymed stanzas are perfect examples of the alliterative long line of ME. See A. A. MacDonald, 1994.
- 49–248 In this group of twenty-five stanzas Dunbar takes his turn at heaping invective upon Kennedy. In doing so, he draws heavily upon the stereotyped figure of the dirty, impoverished, dishonest Highlander, and he depicts Kennedy as a Gaelic bard — an idle, begging wanderer considered by Lowlanders to be thoroughly disreputable. Dunbar's imagery in these verses is frequently drawn from rural farm life in order to portray Kennedy as a barefoot yokel.
- 50 *Cuathinnis*. Probably means "impotent," though possibly "cuckolded," "syphilitic," or "pussy-whipped."
- 51–52 *Denseman . . . galeasmost alyd*. "A Danishman"; there are records of Danish pirates having been executed in Edinburgh upon the execution wheel, a brutal instrument of torture and execution. The bodies of the dead often remain tied to these wheels and were feasted upon by birds. (Compare lines 423–24.) Both Kinsley and Barcroft gloss *galeasnowr* as "yellow nose" — suggesting perhaps "ghoulish"; or maybe they have in mind a (sea)gull's beak. But *galeas* is also a heraldic term (here used ironically?) meaning "red," in which case a "red nose" might imply a drunk. The drunkenness of pirates is mythic — "yo ho ho and a bottle of rum," etc. Certainly a "Denseman" would not be noted for abstinence. Robinson, on the other hand, sees Kennedy's *galeasnowr* (ghoul-snout) as a deformity resembling symptoms of leprosy,

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syphilis, or tuberculosis, since "erosion of the nasal septum" is an indication of any one of these diseases. "Of course," she adds, "he might just have had an ugly nose" (p. 278). Perhaps there is wordplay on *gleddis*, which could mean "glowing red coals" as well as "kites."

- 56     *Lowland ery wald mak o bestir noysis.* "Dunbar uses the pun on Erse [Gaelic] / *wese* to suggest that Lowland farting is more pleasant than Highland speech" (Robichaud, p. 12).
- 64     I.e., "a mere wisp of straw may wipe away your wit and wisdom." (Wisps of straw could be used as toilet paper.)
- 65     *Thow speirit, dastard, gif I dar with thee fecht.* Dunbar is apparently referring back to Kennedy's original challenge in lines 1-2.
- 66     *Dagone dowbart.* Here used to mean "monster," but stemming from Dagon, the name of the Philistine deity in 1 Kings (1 Samuel) 5:2-7; *dowbart* is an abusive term of obscure origin. *DOST* glosses the sense as "a dull or stupid person."
- 71-72    Dunbar says he will cause him to cry out by whipping him with a dog leash; more noble weapons — such as a knife, sword, or ax — would be neither necessary nor appropriate for a cut such as Kennedy.
- 73     *crop and rane.* Literally, "shoots and root," but meaning something in its entirety. Here it implies that he is both the cause and the result of treason and treachery. Compare Chaucer's *TC* 2.348.
- 76     The verse reiterates what Dunbar has already suggested about Kennedy in line 50.
- 77-80    Here Dunbar accuses Kennedy of attempting to poison "our lord's chief [or 'our chief lords'?] in Paisley," possibly an allusion to a specific event, though that remains uncertain. Kennedy appears to be rebutting this charge in lines 417-20.
- 81-82    Dunbar suggests that Kennedy's physical appearance offers a clear indication of his malicious nature. The pseudo-science of physiognomy, which maintained that a person's external body offers clues to one's own inner nature, remained popular in Scotland in the late Middle Ages.

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- 83 *glengoir loun*. Hawcutt emends to *gasyallow*, reasoning that Ganelon, the arch-traitor of the *Song of Roland*, better accords with the accusations of treachery. But the reading of the MS seems to fit the specific context of this stanza better, where the emphasis is on Kennedy's ugliness and physical abnormality — his "frawart phisnomy" (line 81).
- 84 *fey*, "Midden" (dunghill), not "marsh"; compare line 517, and Henryson's *Fables*, line 111. Compare also Whiting F120.
- 85 Dunbar's grievances against Kennedy also include Kennedy's attacks upon Dunbar's friends.
- 89–90 Dunbar suggests that Kennedy delayed making his malicious allegations until Dunbar was on shipboard, thus giving Dunbar no chance to respond to them.
- 90–96 The stormy voyage Dunbar mentions here was probably a real one, though scholars are unsure of the date and have discussed at length the geographical possibilities. This is probably the same voyage that Kennedy depicts so graphically (!) in lines 449–72.
- 91 The allusions to the classical gods Aeolus and Neptune, who cause this tempest at sea, provide a heroic coloration to the ill-fated voyage. Hawcutt suggests that those verses recall, "imperfectly, an episode in *Aeneid* 1.81–141 where Aeolus shatters the ships of Aeneas and black clouds obliterate the sun" (Bw 2.433).
- 94 *Seland*. Perhaps Zealand, the island on which Copenhagen stands, though more likely it is the area of Holland called Zeeland; *Yetland* (in the MS *jetland*) may be either Jutland (in Denmark), or Shetland.
- 97 *Thow caulis thee rebore with thy galdin lippis*. Compare Kennedy's reference to himself in line 500 as "of rhetory the rose."
- 99 *glantoch*, with *thy galdin lippis*. "You are knobby-kneed with your kilted hips" (?); if *galdin* does mean "kilted" (i.e., "tucked up") here, as the context suggests, it would be one of the earliest occurrences of the term. There is probably wordplay, also, on "golden lips" and "gilded hips." William Neill, on the other hand, traces *glantoch* to Gaelic *glan dubh*, "black-kneed," suggesting that it "refers to a man who wore no breeches [...] and in those unhygienic days black knees would be common" (as

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cited by Roderick MacDonald, p. 84). Neill glosses *giltin* as "yellow," implying old and jaundiced. See line 104.

- 104     *thy bawis hingis throw thy breik.* Refers to the fact that the kilted Highlander commonly wore no undergarments.
- 106–12    In these verses Dunbar disparagingly suggests that "flying" is an art form in which Gaelic poets or bards took particular delight.
- 112     *Corrik.* The southern district of Ayrshire; it remained primarily Gaelic-speaking until after Dunbar's time. It was "a lowly populated area of upland pasture" (Bw 2.434).
- 113     Taking a dog out to defecate was a task given to the lowest ranking servants. Compare *The Flying betwixt Polwart and Montgomerie*, in *The Poems of Alexander Montgomerie*, ed. David Irving (Edinburgh: J. Ballantyne and Co., 1821), line 370.
- 115–20    Dunbar depicts Kennedy as a country peasant who did not bother to work hard during the summer and thus starves in the winter.
- 121     Dunbar frequently remarks on Kennedy's dirty, unkempt, and lice-ridden body.
- 123–26    Kennedy's ugly visage is here compared to that of the men who persecuted the saints. St. Lawrence was martyred in Rome by being roasted on a grid. In some accounts and visual depictions, John the Baptist was blindfolded before being beheaded. St. Augustine of Canterbury, according to an early legend, was struck by attackers who wielded fish tails. And St. Bartholomew was flayed alive before being crucified.
- 128     *Haggeis.* Haggis — made from chopped entrails, spices, eggs, and milk that are cooked in a sheep's stomach — wasn't exclusively a Scottish dish at this time. Dunbar is disparaging it for being peasant's fare.
- 129     *na man compriz thee ankers.* "No one values you worth a piece of cress." Compare Whiting C546.
- 131     *kis his ers.* Compare *Towneley Plays* 2.61 and CT VII(C)948.

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141 *Greitund or Galloway lyk to ane gallow breid.* Note the wordplay on Galloway and gallow.

143 Compare "A Ballad of the Friar of Tungland" (Poem 54), line 8.

145 *Ersch katherese.* William Neill points out that "katherese is not a woman's name; rather, an alternate form of ceterus, a Highland marauder or a band of them." (As cited by Roderick MacDonald, pp. 84–85.) But, Roderick MacDonald continues, "is it not possible that Kennedy's wife may in reality have been named Catherine, and that Dunbar was guilty of perpetrating a rather low-grade pun?" (p. 85). As Bawcutt observes, this verse "sums up Lowlanders' view of the Highlander" (Bw 2.435), carrying a tartan bag and wearing shoes of undressed hide.

*polk breik.* Often said to be neither garments made from sacking (polk britches). But possibly a variant on *pol breac*, in Gaelic "a speckled purse." See Roderick MacDonald, p. 84.

148 "There is nothing except lice and long fingernails among (the two of) you" — another of Dunbar's barbs about Kennedy's lack of cleanliness.

149–52 Although *heggir-bald* (line 149) is an obscure term, these verses involving the stealing of bens, lamb, and kids suggest the predatory habits of a fox or wolf.

150–52 Compare the effect of the Summoner's face in frightening children (CT II[A]628). Here Kennedy's ugly face frightens mother goats and their offspring.

153–60 In this stanza Dunbar directs his abuse at Kennedy's home — which he says was formerly used to house lepers — and at his wife. Robinson observes that Dunbar frequently connects Kennedy to lepers in both his insulting physical descriptions of his rival and in his implications that Kennedy is guilty of the sin of lust. These insinuations build up repeatedly until the overt reference to Lazarus in stanza 21, at which point it should be clear to the audience that Dunbar is accusing Kennedy of being a leper. Whether or not this accusation is accurate, what is important is the difference it reveals about the attitudes of insulting between medieval and modern culture. While Dunbar's references to Kennedy's numerous and chronic gastrointestinal problems are "delightfully shocking" to its medieval audience, they are perhaps (depending, of course, on the reader) more unpleasantly shocking to us. In contrast, the accusation of leprosy would be much more "vicious and damning" than

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revealing to an audience the fact that Kennedy's wife has to clean his beshitten rear end for him. See Robinson, pp. 275–82.

- 154 For medieval attitudes concerning leprosy, see the introduction to Denton Fox's edition of Henryson, pp. lxxxvii–xc, and also Peter Richards, *The Medieval Leper and His Northern Heirs* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2000).
- 155 *of blis als haire*. "Devoid of bliss"; compare Henryson, *Fables*, line 1701.
- 158 Hawcutt is probably right in suggesting that *dossey* means "harlot" and refers to Kennedy's wife (Bw 2.435).
- 160 *scaryne bell*. A bell rung at the consecration of the Eucharist. Compare "A Ballad of the Friar of Tungland" (Poem 54), lines 49–50.
- 161–76 In this pair of stanzas Dunbar depicts Kennedy as a spirit that has returned from the grave — a parody of the "warning from beyond the grave" motif that occurs in penitential works such as Robert Henryson's poem "The Thre Deid Polis."
- 161 Dunbar's depiction of Kennedy as Lazarus draws upon both of the biblical figures of that name, the Lazarus whom Christ raised from death (John 11:17) and the leper who lay at the rich man's gate (Luke 16:20). It was common for these two figures to be conflated in the Middle Ages.
- 171 *ane saffron bag*. Small bags containing saffron were often worn about the neck; the yellow spice was used medicinally as well as for cooking.
- 172 *spreit of Gy*. In a popular work composed by the Dominican friar Jean Gobi, Gy (or Guido) of Corvo was a tormented spirit who returned to earth to warn his wife by describing the horrors of Purgatory. For a ME version, see *The Gust of Gy*, in *Three Purgatory Poems*, ed. Edward Foster (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), pp. 15–107. A vernacular version of the story occurs in *Scotiachronicon* 13.6–9. Compare Lindsay's *Dreme*, line 16, and *Crying of ane Play*, line 14.
- 177–92 These stanzas contain Dunbar's depiction of Kennedy as a tall, thin scarecrow of a man; they provide a sharp contrast to Kennedy's later depiction of Dunbar as a tiny dwarf of a man.

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- 179     *Hard harchous hirpland, kippit as ase harrow.* Compare Henryson's *Fables*, line 903.
- 184     *carryballid.* An obscure term of abuse; it also occurs in line 94 of *The Tretis of the Twa Marit Women and the Wedo* (Poem 84).
- 185-92     The figurative description of Kennedy in this stanza is that of a bony, shriveled old horse caked with mud and wildflowers.
- 191-92     Bawcutt notes that the images in these verbs are culinary. "Kennedy lies in a saffron sauce . . . sprinkled with powder made from primroses, and scented with cloves" (Bw 2.437).
- 193-200     Here Dunbar briefly engages in excremental humor, something Kennedy does later in the poem to a much greater extent.
- 198     I.e., "You shall (receive it back) again from more witnesses than just me"; what is rebounding against Kennedy is his earlier description of Dunbar as "dirtin" and "dirtfast" in lines 25 and 33.
- 201-32     The emphasis in this group of stanzas is upon Kennedy's extreme rusticity, which makes him an object of scorn and comic amusement in the more sophisticated urban environs of Edinburgh.
- 205     "Now in the uplands you live on rubbed wheat"; rubbing wheat between one's hands was a very primitive method of extracting the grain.
- 209     The identity of Strait Gibbons is uncertain, though a man by that name received a payment in 1503 by royal command. He may have been a court entertainer, very possibly a clown.
- 209-10     Never having ridden a horse reflects on Kennedy's lack of knightly qualities as well as on his poverty.
- 211     Edinburgh Cross, the high market cross in the center of the city, was a site for official proclamations, public punishment of felons, and the like. Thus Kennedy has brought the mad of the country into the symbolic heart of the city. Compare "To the Merchants of Edinburgh" (Poem 75), lines 22-23.

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- 213 Dunbar asserts that Kennedy has cushioned the inside of his boots with straw that sticks out through the worn spots.
- 219 Kennedy is mobbed by the lads of Edinburgh like an owl mobbed by crows. Compare "A Ballad of the Friar of Tungland" (Poem 54), lines 73 ff., and the note to those lines.
- 220 *bitchis.* "Bitches" literally means "female dogs," though here it probably means "dogs" generally; it may have been chosen for the sake of the alliteration. The dogs are excited by the smell of Kennedy's deer-hide boots.
- 221 "Then old women cry out, 'Keep your kerchiefs in the dark'" — i.e., hide your finery, or bring in your laundry. This gibe at Kennedy as a likely thief of clothing continues in lines 223–32. One is reminded of Shakespeare's pick-purse gallows evader, Autolycus, trafficking in sheets, linens, and snapping up "unconsidered trifles" along the way (*Winter's Tale* 4.3.21–30), or Falstaff's collection of gallows-birds stealing clothing in *Henry IV* 4.2.42–48.
- 225–32 Dunbar revels in imagining the noisy uproar Kennedy's presence, with his rattling boots, creates in the midst of the city.
- 233–48 The verses in the final two stanzas of Dunbar's speech are filled with internal rhymes, a device popular among late medieval Scottish poets; compare Henryson's *Prayer for the Peat*, Douglas' *The Palis of Honour* (lines 2116–42), and the final sixty-four verses of Polwarth's *Flying*. The result is that both the vocabulary and the syntax are highly inventive and unconventional. These stanzas, which reprise the main themes of Dunbar's attack, build to a grand crescendo of comic invective.
- 233–35 Dunbar is calling upon Kennedy to admit defeat and beg for mercy (*Cry grace*, line 235) — or else.
- 239 *Forfuirne.* This probably means "defeated in flying," and *barkit kynd* probably refers disparagingly to Kennedy's weathered skin.
- 240 *Clym ladder, fyle solder.* The images here depict a condemned man climbing the ladder to the gallows who defiles (vomits on?) the noose around his neck.
- 241 *air to Hillhouse.* It is not clear what is meant by being "heir to Hill House" or why it is an insult. Barwick suggests that it may have something to do with being a glutton.

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(Bw 2.445). Kennedy also refers to Hill House in line 515. Perhaps the hill house is the sheepfold or an outhouse. Whatever the sense, it is demeaning.

- 241–43 Several of the abusive phrases in these verses are obscure, and their precise meanings can only be guessed at — e.g., *byr battous*, *air to Hillhouse* (line 241), and *Chinidilting* (line 243). *DOST battois* n. cites *Hume Epistle* 145: "My breast was brusd . . . My buttons brist," where buttons might imply "nipples"; hence my gloss "nipple-biter" for *byr battous*.
- 245 *rak sanch*. "Stretched" (or "tacked") sack, meaning a "gallows bird"; Bawcutt explains the phrase as "one who stretches a withy, when hanged from it on a gallows" (Bw 2.438). It is also possible that Dunbar is intimating that Kennedy stuffs his trousers with fake marks of manhood made of tallow and rocks. The phrases *cry cranch* and "cry cok" in line 248 refer to cries of submission as a defeated party admits his defeat.
- 247 *curlengis pet*. The phrase may simply mean "old woman's lap pet"; in this list of insults, however, that would seem surprisingly tame, and Bawcutt's suggestion of "fart" (Bw 2.438) may be closer to the mark. Compare the French word *pet* ("fart") and the expression, "hoist by his own petard."
- 249–50 In Numbers 16, Dathan and Abiron are important members of a group that rebel against Moses and Aaron. Their punishment involves being swallowed alive in the earth and taken to Hell. In the latter Middle Ages they were viewed as types of the seditious clergyman and were sometimes linked with the Lollards, as here. *Beliall* (line 250) was the name of a devil famed for his ability to corrupt through persuasive speech. The name originates in the phrase *fili filii Belial* ("sons of Belial") in Judges 19:22 and 1 Kings (1 Samuel) 2:12. See Bw 2.438.
- 249–552 Kennedy's main speech, which occupies the remainder of the poem, is longer than Dunbar's and more discursive; whereas Dunbar's attack on Kennedy is largely personal, Kennedy's attack on Dunbar encompasses a broader range of Scottish history and the larger history of the Dunbar family.
- 254 "Have I not silenced you, knave of a shepherd (or shepherd's knave?)" The reference to Dunbar as a shepherd or shepherd's helper may reflect Kennedy's notion that this particular flying should be viewed as a contest between a pair of pastoral poets.

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- 255 *ryme and ruf*. A contemptuous phrase for alliterative verse. Compare the statement of Chaucer's Parson, who claims that he cannot "rum, ram, ruf" (*CT X*[I]43).
- 257–64 Here Kennedy provides a sketch of the history of the Dunbar family, which may be traced to Gospatrick, earl of Northumberland, who relocated to Scotland in 1068 following the Conquest. Descended from him are the earls of Dunbar and March. Late in the thirteenth century, Patrick, eighth earl of Dunbar and first earl of March, had supported Edward I of England during the earlier stages in the War of Independence.
- 258 The earls of Dunbar held a castle at Cockburnspath in Berwickshire, a few miles to the southeast of the town of Dunbar.
- 259–60 Kennedy creates his own etymological explanation for the name Dunbar, suggesting that it reflects the union of a devil and a she-bear, hence the name *Devilbeir* ("Devil-Bear," line 260) rather than Dunbar.
- 261 This verse may allude to an ancient Celtic tradition in which leaders copulated with horses, though here it is used to comment derisively on Dunbar's monstrous lineage. Kennedy links Dunbar to horses several times (earlier Dunbar had noted Kennedy's "horselessness"), and perhaps Kennedy's description of Dunbar as horse marshall in line 476 involves wordplay on the phrase *meir of Mar* in this verse.
- 262–64 Patrick's support of Edward I is the treachery that Kennedy is alluding to. Much of the information contained in verses 262–88 is probably drawn from Blind Harry's *Wallace*, Books 1 and 8.
- 265 Robert Bruce was the grandfather of Robert I. John Balliol was the nominal king of Scotland from 1292 to 1296, having been granted the title by Edward I of England. Compare "To Aberdeen" (Poem 33), lines 33–40, and the note to those verses.
- 267–68 According to Harry's *Wallace*, during the strife between the Scots and the English Patrick played a key role in opening Berwick to the English. The fall of Berwick occurred on 30 March 1296. See Harry's *Wallace* 1.94.
- 269–72 The Battle of Dunbar, which Kennedy calls Spottismuir, occurred on 27 April 1296. See Harry's *Wallace* 8.180.

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- 270 Edward I was commonly known as "Longshanks" because he was unusually tall. Compare *The Wallace* 1.56.
- 277-78 In 1296 Edward "despoiled" (*xpalyerit* — line 277) Scotland of its most highly revered treasures, including the Stone of Scone, the "Black Rood" of Holyrood House (which was believed to contain fragments of the True Cross), and the crown jewels. See Harry's *Wallace* 1.115-30.
- 281-88 In *The Wallace*, Book 8, Patrick refuses to attend the council called by Wallace and refers to him scornfully as "that king of Kyll" (8.21); subsequently Wallace exiles Patrick from Scotland.
- 287-91 Kennedy, perhaps echoing Isaia's prophecy of the fall of Babylon (13:19-22), predicts a dire future for the castle at Dunbar.
- 292-96 Kennedy now provides Dunbar with an ancestral mother who, after eating from the fateful apple of Paradise that was cast ashore from the sea, coupled with the devil and engendered Devil-bear.
- 295 The cockatrice, a fabulous monster described in medieval bestiaries, was a serpent hatched from a cock's egg; its glasce was poisonous, and it was sometimes compared to women. Basilisks and cockatrices are similar (occasionally the terms are used interchangeably) in bestiaries, though the latter was considered mythical, the former real (see T. H. White, *Bestiary: A Book of Beasts* [New York: Putnam, 1960], p. 169n1).
- 299-304 Here Kennedy relates yet another historical anecdote that associates Dunbar's family with treachery and treason. See *BW* 2.440.
- 309 *Thow wes prestyr and ordainit be Sathan.* Kennedy is casting aspersions on Dunbar's true ordination into the priesthood.
- 313-20 Kennedy suggests that Dunbar has failed to fulfill his responsibilities to his deceased ancestors, whose souls may find no rest because of it.
- 319 Testals were sets of thirty masses that were said for the dead to help their souls to achieve respite from the pains of Purgatory. Compare *CT* III(D)1724-25.

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- 321–22 Kennedy is alluding to the *Eclogae of Theodulor*, a popular Latin school text, which presents a debate between a shepherd and a shepherdess — Pseustis ("Liar"), who represents the falsehood of the pagans, and Alithia, who represents the truth of Christianity. For an English translation of the text, see Ronald E. Pepin, *An English Translation of the Auctores Octo: A Medieval Reader*, Mediaeval Studies 12 (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), pp. 25–40.
- 325–28 Kennedy is suggesting that Dunbar should subject himself to a public act of penance for having slandered Kennedy. The Latin phrase *deliquisti quia* ("Because you have sinned") are the first words spoken by the priest to a penitent during confession.
- 331 Stobo refers to John Reid, a highly respected clerk in the royal secretariat and a figure whose death Dunbar laments in line 86 of "The Lament for the Makars" (Poem 14).
- 332 *Renounce thy rymer, baub haue and bairn thy biff.* Kennedy calls for a public retraction of Dunbar's accusations against him; Bawcutt suggests *bairn thy biff* refers to the "recauton required of heretics" (Bw 2.441).
- 336 *Arthuris Sene.* Arthur's Seat is the name of a high hill on the outskirts of Edinburgh not far from Holyrood Palace. This is one of the first recorded references to it.
- 337–44 Kennedy claims to have walked in the proper season upon the slopes of Mount Parnassus, a place sacred to the Nine Muses, been inspired by Mercury, the god of eloquence, and drunk from Hippocrene, the sacred fountain of poetic inspiration on Mount Helicon. But Dunbar, he says, came there in early spring and merely drank toad-spawn from a pool. This is a case of the traditional modesty *topos* being turned upside down.
- 343 *glosd.* An adjective of uncertain meaning; perhaps "glued" or "gluey"? Or, on the basis of *glosd*, a variant of *glaud*, meaning "barren space" (see *OED*), the sense might be "empty language."
- 345 *eif.* Perhaps here meaning "dwarf," referring to Dunbar's small stature.
- 348 *Scots.* Bawcutt suggests that this is not a personification of Scotland but rather "the mythical daughter of Pharoah and wife to the Greek prince Gadelus, from whom Scots traced their origin" (Bw 2.441).

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- 351 *camfis*. The word may mean "fish tails," reflecting the legend that the people who struck St. Augustine of Canterbury with fish tails (see note to line 125) later gave birth to children having fish tails, a fitting punishment for the English.
- 355 *Qwhare thou writis*. Kennedy is referring to Dunbar's claim in line 51.
- 356 *Domenen of Denmark ar of the kingis kyn*. James III had married Princess Margaret of Denmark in 1468, and thus James IV was the nephew of King Hans of Denmark (1481–1513).
- 358 A sling staff was a sling on a wooden shaft used to hurl stones; compare Barbour's *Bruce* 17.344.
- 361–68 Kennedy is here responding to the charges Dunbar had made in lines 145–52.
- 363–64 Compare Luke 16.20.
- 365 Dunbar's empty purse is mentioned in his petition poems, especially "To the King" (Poem 39).
- 367 *wedy reuch*. The phrase literally means "a tough (or strong) withy" but refers to the hangman's rope.
- 368 *Mount Falcon*. Mount Falcon, or Montfaucon, was the name of the gallows hill near Paris. "It was a huge, several-storyed structure, and sixty criminals could be hanged simultaneously" (Bw 2.441).
- 371 *Aire*. The principal city in Ayrshire, in south-western Scotland; compare "Master Andro Kennedy's Testament" (Poem 80), line 36, and the note to that verse.
- 378–80 Kennedy is apparently referring to the storms Dunbar described in lines 91–95. Carrying holy ashes on a sea voyage would ideally provide a measure of protection; Kennedy alleges that Dunbar lost them and then attempted, unsuccessfully, to rescue them.
- 383 Compare "A Dream" (Poem 41), line 14.

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- 385–92 Kennedy argues that Dunbar's family is not related to the true Dunbars, the earls of Moray, a branch of the Dunbars with a long and valiant history of fighting for Scotland against the English.
- 394 *cor mandom*. A penitential formula originating from Psalm 50:12 in the Vulgate—"Create a clean heart in me, O God"; compare Lindsay, *Flying*, line 20.
- 397 If Dunbar is the same person who received bachelor's and master's degrees from St. Andrews (in 1477 and 1479), these would be the degrees that Kennedy is referring to.
- 399 Medieval fools often had close-cropped hair cuts; compare "A Complaint against Mure" (Poem 60), line 19.
- 405 *Qwhare thou partis poysour to me*. Kennedy is responding to Dunbar's charge in lines 77–78.
- 406–08 Kennedy challenges Dunbar to prove his allegations in personal combat, and he urges him not to try to get out of the fight by claiming benefit of clergy.
- 413–16 Kennedy describes a suitable coat of arms for Dunbar — a gallows, a noose, and a pin — and then suggests an appropriate inscription for the Dunbar coat of arms.
- 425–28 Kennedy here describes Dunbar as having been an itinerant preacher selling pardons, begging for his food, and then stealing under the cover of night. Kennedy's intention is to depict Dunbar as a clergymen of the lowest and most corrupt sort.
- 429–40 In order to escape Scottish ill will, Kennedy asserts, Dunbar traveled abroad under the pretense of being a wandering pilgrim — a "feigned palmer."
- 430 *a krycht of the feld*. The phrase may be an idiom meaning "a wandering vagabond" or perhaps "a pretended pilgrim."
- 431 Scallop shells indicated that a pilgrim had been to the shrine of St. James of Compostella in Spain. A *hardsoun* was a pilgrim's staff; why it is described as *kelsoun* ("cold" or "cooled"?) is unclear, though the rhyme scheme requires such a word.
- 433–36 Kennedy suggests that Dunbar was too cowardly to risk crossing the mountain passes that would have allowed him to make a pilgrimage to Rome.

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- 437–40 Kennedy portrays Dunbar as becoming the master hangman's apprentice, receiving half a frank for each person he hangs. He is referring back to line 368.
- 443 "You drank your savings" — Compare Whiting T253.
- 446 *Danzikyn*. Danzig (modern Gdańsk), the Baltic seaport with which Scotland regularly traded.
- 447 *De profundis*. The opening phrase of Psalm 129 in the Vulgate — "Out of the depths I have cried to thee, O Lord." Psalm 129 is considered one of the penitential psalms.
- 449–72 This extended scene in which Dunbar has an ignominious experience on a ship named the *Katherine* may contain a kernel of truth, though it may also be wholly fictitious. Kennedy here shows himself to be Dunbar's equal when it comes to excremental humor. For additional information, see Bw 2.443.
- 455–56 *The soulis had sondyn throu the syn of thee / War not the peple maid so grete prayere*. Perhaps there is an oblique allusion here to the story of Jonah, whose sin nearly caused the deaths of all on board the ship.
- 457 *the schip was saynit*. Ships were blessed before departing in order to ensure a safe voyage.
- 461 *the Bar*. Bass Rock is in the Firth of Forth, not far from Edinburgh. Dunbar apparently wasted little time in besouling the ship.
- 468 *tow the collom*. This phrase is difficult to construe, largely because of the term *collom*, which does not appear in *DOST*. Kinsley posits that the phrase means "captured the ship," a meaning that would require *collom* to be the result of minim confusion; the original word being *colvie*. It is tempting to read the line as "taken the column" (i.e., group of soldiers), but this usage for the word *colam* is not attested until 1677 (*OED*). Other possibilities might be an odd spelling of *culom*, meaning "fundament," which accords well with the scatological nature of these lines but makes little sense with the verb *tow*. An unusual spelling of *culm*, meaning "bundle of thatch," is likewise fraught with difficulties (*MED*).
- 473–80 Kennedy commands Dunbar to go into exile in England, suggesting that he might try to pass himself off as a "horse marshall."

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- 474     *botwand*. An obscure term, but possibly a type of whip that would identify him as a master of horses: i.e., a "butt-wand."
- 481     *Hye souverane lorde*. Kennedy is apparently addressing James IV, which underscores the likelihood that this is all a courtly entertainment.
- 484     *A rotyn crok, louise of the dol, thare down*. Kennedy echoes the phrases Dunbar had used to describe him in line 248. The phrase *thare down* seems to mean "send him down to England where he belongs!"
- 489     To be conceived or born during a total eclipse would have been a very ominous sign. Scholars have debated the possible biographical significance of this detail and the general consensus is that it has none. Compare line 14, and "Of a Black Moer" (Poem 71), line 13.
- 490     Although Mercury is usually portrayed as a beneficent deity and the god that inspires eloquence, he can also possess less positive attributes, as is apparently the case here.
- 497     *gakkir*. The likely meaning is "fool." Compare "In a Secret Place" (Poem 72), line 39.
- 500     *Rymir thou of me, of rethory the rose*. Compare *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), line 253, where Chaucer is called the "rose rethoris all."
- 505–08     Kennedy's remark suggests that Dunbar's great desire to receive a benefice, a central concern in several of Dunbar's many petition poems, was a well-known fact. Blawcott may be correct in suggesting that the allusion to Judas' bells refers to the ritual silencing of the Bells during the three days prior to Easter, with the implication that Dunbar is only fit for minor clerical duties (Bw 2.444). The remark may also be meant as a slur against Dunbar's talent as a poet, as lines 507–08 surely are.
- 513     Cain, the slayer of his brother Abel (Genesis 4), was cursed to become a fugitive and vagabond. Titivillus is the name of a demon who figures prominently in the *Towneley Plays* and in *Mankind*; he reveled in recording and spreading malicious gossip. In a late ME lyric (see Davies, p. 198), Titivillus is "the devil of Hell."

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- 514 Bawcutt suggests that "mermaid" implies effeminacy as well as monstrosity (Bw 2.444).
- 515-16 Kennedy's suggestion that Dunbar be baked and served to the lord of Hill House is probably another reference to his small size. There are many recorded examples of marvelous things being served within baked pies, including not only the four and twenty black birds of the nursery rhyme but even a small man.
- 521-44 In this extended catalogue of treacherous figures, Kennedy associates Dunbar with a whole host of traitors and enemies of the Christian faith that is drawn from Scripture, literature, history, mythology, and popular lore.
- 523 In Henryson's *Orpheus*, Pontius Pilate is placed in Hell, line 327.
- 524 The Lollards, an important reform movement within the church during Chaucer's time, were later condemned as heretics.
- 525 Simony was a serious crime that involved the buying or selling of benefices; given Dunbar's numerous pleas for a benefice, the charge has some pertinence.
- 526 Mohammad could be used as a synonym for Satan but could also refer to any devil.
- 528 Gog and Magog were thought to be allies of the Antichrist (Apocalypse 20:7) and persecutors of Christians. They are first mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Compare "Of James Dog" (Poem 57), line 19.
- 529 Nero was one of the great persecutors of Christians among the Roman emperors. Golyat usually refers to the Philistine giant Goliath whom David slew but also may suggest the Latin poet known as the Archpoet, the author of "The Archpoet's Confession." In the first case Golyat would suggest Dunbar as a freak of nature, and in the second it would suggest his irreverence and vulgarity.
- 530 Although Potiphar's wife is not named in Genesis, *Egyptia* (meaning "the Egyptian woman") is the name given to her in the apocryphal work *The Testament of Joseph*, one of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.
- 532 *Ternyegansir*. Ternagant was often used as the name for one of the Saracen gods, though here it is probably used as a synonym for "demons" or "devils." Compare "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins" (Poem 77), line 115, and Henryson's

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*Annoxiation*, line 68. Vespasian was a Roman emperor, though not one of the ones especially noted for persecuting Christians.

- 534 *Cayphas*. The high priest at the trial of Jesus mentioned in Matthew 26:57 and John 11:49–53.
- 535 *Piato*. I.e., Satan. Compare "The Merle and the Nightingale" (Poem 65), lines 125–26.
- 537 *Egyas*. Probably the Roman proconsul responsible for the martyrdom of St. Andrew.
- 538 *Marciane*. Probably the heretic Marcian of Sinope. See *The Golden Legend* 7.146.
- Maxenclius*. Probably the son of the Roman emperor Maximianus and a party to the martyrdom of St. Catherine of Alexandria. See *The Golden Legend* 7.16.
- 539 *Antenor and Aeneas* are Trojan princes who conspired with the Greeks to bring about the defeat of Troy, a story alluded to in Chaucer's TC but more fully told in Guido de Columnis' *Historia Destructionis Troise*, books 28–30.
- 540 *Throp*. A woman or goddess whose identity remains uncertain (Criseyde and Atropos are among those suggested).
- Olivriax*. Probably the Roman prefect who ordered the death of St. Margaret of Antioch.
- 541 *Pattidew*. The name often assigned to the figure known as the Wandering Jew who, because of his rudeness to Jesus on the *via dolorosa*, was condemned to wander the earth until the Last Day.
- Baal*. A Phoenician god and pagan idol.
- Eyobshet*. Probably Eubulus Aurelius, a priest of Baal under the emperor Elagabalus.
- 545–52 As Dunbar had done in his final stanzas (lines 232–48), Kennedy here revels in the use of internal rhymes.

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- 546-52 The jingling effect of the triple rhymes and rhythms brings the flying to its conclusion.
- 548 *loup Lollardorum*. I.e., "chief of heretics."
- 551 *Tale tellare*. Probably carries both the meaning "teller of lies" and "teller of inferior tales," a final slur on Dunbar's artistry.
- 552 *Spook*. A term used for a small bird such as a chaffinch. Kennedy is taking a parting shot at Dunbar's small size, as well as suggesting that he is merely a tiny, insignificant thing.

*Termagorum*, Bw 2.446 mentions that this unclear word may be connected to *Terwygantis* of line 532 and that the term in general may come from "ter" and "magus." (Thrice-magician — perhaps a kind of arch-fiend.) Compare Gower, *Confessio Amantis* 4.2408. Whatever the etymology, Kennedy's meaning is still clear: "go to Hell."

**84. *The Tretis of the Twa Marit Wemen and the Wedo***

*The Tretis of the Twa Marit Wemen and the Wedo* is Dunbar's longest poem and also his most provocative, generating greatly differing responses from its readers. Perhaps reflecting the views of many readers is Spearing, who suggests that the *Tretis* is at once the poet's "most exciting and disturbing poem" (1985, p. 215). While critics have long viewed the poem as a satiric exposé of the vices and hypocrisy of women, several recent critics have observed that the *Tretis* is at least as revealing about men as it is about women.

In its design the *Tretis* is simple enough: on Midsummer's Eve just after midnight the narrator, in search of amusement, squeezes himself into a hedge that surrounds a beautiful garden and eavesdrops on the private conversation of the three lovely ladies who are there entertaining themselves. What he hears is their bitter denunciation of the institution of marriage and their scathing comments about their husbands' sexual inadequacies. Their discussion is framed by a pair of ironic *demandes d'amore*: the Widow initiates the discussion by asking the two younger wives if they do not agree that marriage is a blessed bond. Indeed they do not. Once the women have concluded their lengthy colloquy and headed off home, the narrator poses the second *demande d'amore* to his audience — which of these three lovely ladies would you most desire to have for your wife?

The *Tretis* draws upon several literary and cultural traditions. In genre it reflects aspects of the medieval debate poem, the flying, the *chanson de mal murié*, the comic poem in which

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drunken women revile their husbands (compare Dunbar's "The Twa Cumnaris" [Poem 82]), and the mock sermon. The poem is greatly informed by an extensive tradition of medieval anti-feminist writings, including a special category of works about women that focuses on the vices attributed to widows. The *Tretis* is also the last great poem of the Middle Ages to be written in alliterative verse; although Dunbar often employs alliteration in his poems, this is the only one composed in the alliterative long line exclusively.

Many commentators have been struck by Dunbar's success in combining disparate elements into an artistic whole, in particular his union of elements drawn from dream-vision tradition, which comprise the poem's outer framework, with the obscene invective characteristic of the flying in the women's conversation. One of Dunbar's chief devices in the *Tretis* involves the collision of opposites — the beautiful with the obscene, the natural with the stylized, the idealized with the starkly realistic. He does this in both large and small ways. Take, for example, the obvious contrast between the external beauty of the poem — the idealized setting of the dream vision and the physical perfection of the three lovely ladies — with the ugliness and vulgarity of their drunken conversation. Or take as a specific instance of this device line 96 — "Bot soft and souppill as the silk is his sary lurne" — in which the First Wife applies the image of the soft and lovely texture of silk to her husband's lifeless penis, an arresting combination. The women are remarkable — both shocking and witty — in their invention of bawdy language as each attempts to outdo the other, a sort of one-upmanship (see Burness, pp. 210–11). Dunbar fuses "the language of the court and the language of the byre to suggest that there is no simple way — perhaps no real way — to convey in words the full significance of human sexual activity" (Burness, p. 218).

Chaucer's influence on the poem is extensive, and Chaucerian elements are drawn from several of the individual *Canterbury Tales*, especially from The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale and The Merchant's Tale, but also from The Miller's Tale and The Shipman's Tale. Some of these passages are pointed out in the notes that follow. Curiously, The Nun's Priest's Tale may also be pertinent to the discussion of Chaucer's influence on the *Tretis*, for it is the one tale of Chaucer's that reflects an overall structural design somewhat similar to Dunbar's poem. In both works the real is juxtaposed with the ideal for the purposes of satire. In Chaucer's tale the realistic world of the widow and her daughters encloses and sharply contrasts with the superficially beautiful and idealized world of Chauntecleer and Pertelot. In Dunbar's poem the idealized world of the garden and its three superficially lovely ladies contains an inner reality that is ugly, vulgar, and bestial.

One of the most fascinating elements of the poem is the narrator himself. What should readers make of him? Is he simply a neutral and unobtrusive narrator like the person who reports the debate he has overheard between the owl and the nightingale in the famous ME debate poem; or is he an obsessed voyeur, a peeping-ton perversely fascinated by the forbidden world he secretly intrudes upon? Should we assume that the narrator is actually the poet? And, if so, what does that reveal about Dunbar, a celibate clergyman, and his true

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feelings toward women? Is the narrator simply a convenient device, or might he represent a typical member of the court of James IV? Has he learned anything from the experience he reports, or is he more like one of the narrators of Chaucer's dream poems who comes away from his experience no wiser than he began?

The divisions in the text of 530 alliterative verses are editorial and follow those used by Kinsley. This composite text is based upon the texts in MF and RP. M647, K14, Bw3.

- 1       *the Midfremmer Eve*. Midsummer's Eve, which was also St. John's Eve, occurred in the Middle Ages on the evening of June 23. Although the vigil preceding the Feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist should have been a time for serious reflection, Midsummer's Eve was commonly celebrated with dancing, bonfires, and other forms of revelry, activities often condemned by medieval preachers.
- 4       *Hawthorne treiz*. Hawthorns were often trimmed to create thick and thorny hedges. There may also be some pertinence to the fact that in fairy lore hawthorns are closely associated with magical occurrences.
- 5-7      This night-singing bird is probably the nightingale, a bird in medieval literature that often served to inspire romantic feelings. Given the nature of the feelings the three women will soon be expressing, there is irony in the use of this stock convention.
- 9        *dirkin efter mirthis*, "Rest quietly after merry-making"; apparently the narrator has been celebrating the evening also, which raises the possibility that what follows is a dream; often in dream-vision poems the narrator is lulled asleep by the fragrance of the flowers and the singing of birds.
- 10      *donkit*. Literally "dunked" but here meaning "moistened"; compare the ME *Parlement of the Three Ages*, line 10: "dewe appon dayses donkede full faire."
- 11      *one holyn hevinlie grein hewit*. Like the hawthorn, the holly was also commonly associated with magic and fairy lore. In SGK the Green Knight holds a holly sprig in one hand and an ax in the other (lines 206-09); that poem begins near the mid-winter festival, as this one does the mid-summer festival.
- 11-14     These successive verses all alliterate on the "h" sound, an example of what is sometimes called running alliteration.
- 14        The observer is also in close proximity to the hawthorn in *Wynnewe and Wantouwe* (line 36), Henryson's *Fables* (line 1729), and Lindsay's *Papynge* (lines 187-89).

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- 17 *arbeir*. Literally "arbor," but the word usually refers to a private grassy space located within a garden, often among trees. Compare the ME *Pearl*, lines 9–10: "Alas! I leste hyr is on erbere; / Thurgh geuse to grunde hit from me yet." Compare also *The Kingis Quair*, lines 211–24.
- 21–24 The women's tresses hang freely over their backs and shoulders but their heads are partially covered by kerchiefs. Their hair and their green apparel suggest the twenty-four dancing maidens in "To Princess Margaret" (Poem 32), lines 41–44. The color green may suggest freshness and innocence but also magic and fairy looe. Compare also *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), lines 58–62.
- 27–29 Flower imagery is a highly traditional means of describing female beauty in medieval literature.
- 31 *anenamlit*. Literally "enameled" but here meaning "brightly colored." Compare *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), lines 13 and 250–51.
- 34–35 The table and the wine cups, like the fine ladies, are of great beauty and value.
- 36 *wlonkay*. This is a word often used in alliterative verse as an adjective meaning "lovely." It is commonly applied to women — compare *Pistel of Sweete Sase*, line 26: "That wlonkest in weede." It is unusual for it to be used as a noun, as here.
- 37 *hannoun*. "Playful" or "jesting," but also "lascivious" or "lewd"; the ambiguity is surely intentional. Compare the use of the word in line 529.
- 39 *They wanachir at the nicht wyne and waris oat wroardir*. This line provides the first hint that these fine ladies may not be all that they seem, for the verb *wanachir*, which means "quaffed" or "pulled at," does not strike a genteel note.
- 44 *leyd spouse lyf*. I.e., (any) living person.
- 47 The "blessed bond that binds so fast" is of course marriage, which in the Middle Ages was considered permanent.
- 49–145 In these verses the first of the two married women presents her views of marriage and describes her personal experience of marriage.

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- 53 "Chains are always to be avoided." This image of marriage as "chains" is fairly common; compare lines 9–16 of Chaucer's "Envoy de Chaucer a Bukton," and also Whiting C144. For the phrase "changes are sweet," compare the suggestion in line 20 of John Donne's "The Indifferent" that "love's sweetest part" is "variety."
- 56 *God, gif matrimony.* "God, if [only] marriage . . ."; or perhaps there should be no comma after *God*, the sense of the line being: "[It were] good if marriage were made to last for only a year," etc.
- 56–65 The First Wife's suggestion that marriage should only last a year reflects the fact that most species of birds re-mate on an annual basis. The springtime selection of those new mates is one of the central concerns in Chaucer's *PF*.
- 58 In ME texts the words *lynd* and *nature* are virtually synonymous and are often used interchangeably.
- 67 *ewrage.* The word has a wide range of meanings in ME texts, but in this poem it generally refers to "sexual desire" or "potency."
- 69 *gent, richt joyas and gear.* There is probably a scribal error in the repetition of *gent*.
- 70–75 The First Wife's behavior recalls the behavior of the Wife of Bath, who also delights in going "To prechynge eek, and to thise pilgramages, / To pleyes of myracles, and to mariages" (*CT* III[D]557–58). Compare also line 474 below.
- 79 The First Wife refers to the traditional yoke of marriage (compare Chaucer's Merchant's Tale, *CT* IV[E]1283–85), but here she also likens the husband to a yoked animal used for plowing, a common metaphor for having sex.
- 80 *preveit his pitte.* "Proved or tested his sexual potency"; the Wife of Bath may also be using the word *pitt* in the sense of "sexual vigor" in *CT* III(D)475.
- 81 *airk . . . markat.* I.e., in every public place.
- 85–88 Note the running alliteration in these verses.
- 85 *forky fare.* The phrase is obscure, but the line seems to refer to a draft animal, and therefore *fare* may mean "furrow" or perhaps "furrower." The *OED* takes *forky* to be a variant of *forcy*, meaning "powerful, strong."

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- 87 *fresche of his forme as flouris in May.* For this common simile compare the famous line in the description of Chaucer's Squire: "He was as fresh as is the month of May" (CT II[A]92); compare also Whining F306.
- 89–145 Here the First Wife presents a portrait of her old, jealous, worthless husband — a literary type known as the *sowre assent*. John the Carpenter in The Miller's Tale reflects this stock character, but the fullest literary example is January in The Merchant's Tale. Compare also Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*, lines 179–95.
- 90 *wodrouse.* The term is clearly abusive, though the precise sense is uncertain.
- 91 Phlegm was one of the four bodily humors or fluids, and it was thought to be the dominant humor during old age. Compare line 272.
- 92 *scabbiit.* Literally "having scabs" but figuratively meaning "worthless"; the word *scustarde* is obscure but may derive from the verb *scouer*, "shoot, spurt," and thus may mean "one who pours out," i.e., "defecates"; compare the use of "schate" in line 451 of the *Flyting* (Poem 83).
- 94–95 Compare January's love-making in The Merchant's Tale (CT IV[E]1823–27).
- 94 Compare the *Flyting* (Poem 83), line 184.
- 97 *to the syn assent.* As Bawcutt observes, this is a "sarcastic use of theological terminology" (Bw 2.288). Compare *The Pistel of Swete Sutan*.
- 101–17 In these verses the First Wife portrays her husband as being a devil or an incubus demon.
- 101 *Mahowne.* Literally Muhammad, who was commonly viewed by medieval Christians as a pagan god, though many writers used his name as a synonym for the Devil. Compare the *Flyting* (Poem 83), line 233; "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins" (Poem 77), lines 6, 27, 109; and "The Antichrist" (Poem 51), line 32.
- 105–08 Again compare the description of January's love-making in CT IV(E)1823–27.
- 107 A heckle was an implement used to comb out flax during an early stage in the process of making linen. See Henryson's *Fables*, lines 1825–29.

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- 112 *Belzebul*. I.e., Beelzebul, the "Lord of the Flies," a Syrian deity (4 Kings [2 Kings] 1:2); he was often viewed as being the devil's chief deputy, if not the devil himself. Compare also Matthew 12:24.
- 113 *smale smoter*. A phrase of uncertain meaning, but the context suggests something like "ugly mug" or "wicked smile."
- 114 "He pushes out his lower lip like a sick old horse loering at a filly." *Farcy* refers to an equine ailment involving, among other things, nasal discharge.
- 120 *gib*. "Cat"; in later Scots usage the term denotes a castrated tomcat.
- 127 *Vener werkis*. "Venus' works," i.e., "sexual acts." Compare *CT IV[E]1971*, and *Destruction of Troy*, lines 753–54.
- 128 May similarly "preyseth nat [January's] pleyyng worth a bese" in *The Merchant's Tale* (*CT IV[E]1854*).
- 131–41 The First Wife's refusal to grant her husband any sexual favors until she has received payment in the form of rich gifts is a tactic also employed by the Wife of Bath (*CT III[D]407–16*). Compare: *RR* 13663–14546 on the old Dverna's advice toward securing gifts.
- 135–36 Wordplays involving *poo* and *parse* — for penis and scrotum — are common. Compare *CT III(D)44a–44b*, and *IV(E)1736–37*.
- 141 *rossty raid*. "An armed incursion" but also "an incompetent mounting"; compare the similar suggestion of impotence implied by the Reeve's "rusty blade" in his portrait in the General Prologue (*CT I[A]620*).
- 142 *Johnie Blaist*. Scottish slang for a simpleton ("blant" means "dull" or "slow-witted"), but there is surely sexual double entendre here as well.
- 145 *sire*. It is possible to read a pun on the term *sire* as meaning not just "man," "husband," or "lord," but also "sire" in the sense of a "male parent of a quadruped," though the earliest attribution given by the *OED* for this meaning is 1523. This alternative reading is certainly fitting as the First Wife has already described her husband in bestial terms (see, for example, lines 131 and 137) and is currently describing how he "mounts" her. It hardly needs pointing out that associating him

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with a stallion is here an insult to his manliness, not a compliment to his sexuality. The Widow likewise disparagingly refers to having sex with one of her deceased husbands as being "loppin with sic a lob avoir" ("mounted by such a clumsy horse" — line 387).

- 147     *leach upon loft*. A common alliterative phrase; compare *Rauf Collyvar*, line 739, and Holland's *Howlur*, line 828.
- 161–238 The Second Wife's marital confession, which requires seventy-seven verses, is longer and more elaborate and more scurrilous than that of the First Wife; the Widow's confession, which comes last, far surpasses them both in every respect.
- 161     Her assertion that "there is no spy near" is of course incorrect, and serves to remind us of the narrator, securely hidden in the hedge, whose mental recorder is functioning very well.
- 162–67 *I sail a ragment revell . . . that swelit wes gret*. The Second Wife employs the imagery of pregnancy, but she is only pregnant with resentment, not child. The dichotomy underscores her husband's general lack of virility.
- 164–67 Her sentiments here are strikingly similar to those expressed by Dunbar in his petition poem "Against the Solicitors at Court" (Poem 45), lines 85–88. Compare also the sentiments of King Midas' wife in The Wife of Bath's Tale: "Hir thought it swal so soore about his herte / That nedely sorn word hire mooste asterte" (CT III[D]967–68).
- 168     *hur mairier*. Not a "whoremaster" in the usual sense, but rather a frequenter of whores. The Second Wife's husband is a worn-out lecher who bears some resemblance to the Wife of Bath's fourth husband, a "reveleur" who had a mistress (CT III[D]453).
- 183     *Venus chamber*; "Venus' chamber," a common sexual euphemism; compare the Wife of Bath's statement: "I koude noght withdrawe / My chamber of Venus from a good felawe" (CT III[D]617–18). A lady's chamber was a small private room connected to her bower (i.e., bedroom). Compare also lines 430–31.
- 185     I.e., "He looks like a man who would make a fine lover, though he is of little worth."

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- 186 *dotir dog.* This is apparently a traditional figure for describing lecherous old would-be lovers. Chaucer uses it also in *The Parson's Tale* when he says the hound, "whan he comis by the roser . . . though he may nat pisso, yet wole he heve up his leg" (*CT X[I]858*), referring to "olde dotardes holours" (*CT X[I]857*).
- 195 *God wot qwhat I think quhen he so tho spelis.* Compare *The Merchant's Tale*: "But God woot what that May thoughte in his herte" (*CT IV[E]1851*).
- 197-98 The sense of these verses is difficult, and the repetition of *bot* may indicate textual corruption. Perhaps the meaning is something like: "Unless he himself one evening might make some (sexual) attempt on one of them; but he is not such a person, nor one who possesses their natural powers (i.e., virility)."
- 201 *geir.* "Jet"; jet is a hard, dense form of coal; in Dunbar's time it was often polished into black beads used in inexpensive jewelry.
- 202 *He had the glowyng of gold and wes hot glase fundis.* Proverbial; compare Whiting G282.
- 203 *fierse.* "Fierce"; i.e., "cager with desire."
- 206 The earliest recorded references to St. Valentine as the patron saint of lovers and mating birds occurs in such fourteenth-century poems as Chaucer's *PF* and *The Complaint of Mars*, and Oton de Granson's *Le Songe Saix Valenta*. There is nothing in the legend of the early Christian martyr to explain why he became associated with amorous feelings, aside from the fact that his feast day occurs in the early spring on 14 February, about the time that birds would actually be selecting their new mates.
- 232 *geir.* For the use of this term in a sexual sense, compare "These Fair Ladies That Repair to Court" (Poem 73), line 32.
- 234 *strak.* "Strike" or "stroke," here clearly used as a sexual metaphor, though normally a term more appropriate for military usage.
- 236 *werkit.* "Worked," but here used in the sense of "ached."

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- 238 *bird*. A common term in romance poetry for an attractive young woman. Compare Chaucer's *Romanus*, line 1014, *Sir Degrevant*, line 701, or *Erle of Tolous*, line 844.
- board. "A jest"; the Second Wife's point is that the love-making would be so good that there would be nothing to make jokes about.
- 245–504 These verses contain the Widow's monologue, which has its closest counterpart, not in the confessions of the first two wives, but in the self-exposé of Chaucer's Wife of Bath.
- 247–50 This is the Widow's invocation, which draws upon the stock phrases of medieval preachers; indeed, what she presents to the other two wives amounts to a kind of mock-sermon, as well as a parody of a saint's life. See A. A. MacDonald, "Alliterative Poetry," p. 269.
- 250 *And mak yow meeker to men in manoris and condicions*. This verse is of course ironic, for her intent is not at all to make the women she is "preaching" to be meeker in their behavior and attitudes toward men.
- 257 *Unto my lessoun ye lyth and leir at me wir*. Here, too, the Widow presents herself as a preacher who is instructing her less experienced audience.
- 260–69 These verses recall the ironic advice to women contained in the *envoio* to The Clerk's Tale, *CT IV(E)* 1183–1206.
- 262 *turturiz*. The turtle dove, one of the few species of birds that mates for life, was a symbol of marital fidelity and of constancy in love. See *PF* lines 582–83 "'Nay, God forbede a louere shulde chaunge!' / The turtle weyde, and wes for shame al red."
- tauis*. For "tails" as the female sex organs, compare *CT III(D)* 467 and *CT VII(B')* 416 and 434, and *Piers Plowman* B.3.131. Kinsley cites as a further example "cocke Looelles Bote" (ca. 1515), line 14: "Many whyte nonnes with whyte vayles / That was full wanton of theyt tayles," noting the bilingual pun on tail, from OE *taegl*, for posterior extremity of an animal, and OF *taille*, for a cut or division (p. 269).
- 263–64 The Widow here echoes Christ's words to the Apostles: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves" (Matthew 10:16–17). Like the Wife of Bath, the

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Widow employs Scripture for her own purposes. The dove — possibly distinct from the "turtile" — was a symbol of meekness. Compare "To a Lady" (Poem 63), lines 36–37.

- 269      *nought worth a hen*. A common expression for something of little value; compare the Wife of Bath's "nat worth an hen," *CT* III(D)1112, and Whiting H347. See also the Monk's scornful "He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen" *CT* I(A)177.
- 270–409 In this section of her speech the Widow presents her marital autobiography; like the Wife of Bath, she successively characterizes each of her marriages — in her case two rather than five. Her first husband was senile and impotent and resembles the Wife of Bath's first three husbands (*CT* III(D)272–95).
- 273      *I hatir him like a hond thought I it bid preve*. Compare Whiting H585.
- 274      *kissing . . . clapping*. "Kissing and clipping (embracing)" a common collocation in medieval works, especially in romances: see, e.g., The Merchant's Tale, *CT* IV(E)2413; *Emaré*, lines 212, 1020; *Floris and Blancheflour*, line 503; and Malory (Works, p. 168).
- 275      *close his crake bak*. "Scratch his crooked back"; i.e., to "cause him pleasure," or to "flatter him." Compare the Cook's response to the Reeve in the *Canterbury Tales*: "For joye him thought he clawed him on the bak" (I(A)4326).
- 277      *bler his . . . e*. A common expression meaning "to cheat or trick"; compare the Miller's remark in The Reeve's Tale: "They wene that no man may hem bigyle, / But by my thrif, yet shal I blere hir yc" (*CT* I(A)4048–49); and compare Henryson's *Fables*, line 2041, and Whiting E217.
- 283–87 The Widow boasts openly of having a youthful lover, something the Wife of Bath only hints at. The Widow's greater candor may reflect the fact that she is speaking privately to a select audience of kindred spirits, whereas the Wife of Bath is speaking publicly to a much broader audience.
- 284      *coasth be secrete and sure and ay saif my honour*. The Widow's concern for her reputation had practical implications, but it also mirrors the discretion required of courtly lovers engaging in an affair.
- 289      *But leit the swetir ay the swer to god sexone bring*. Compare *King Hart*, lines 657–58.

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- 291–93 The Widow's husband, out of devotion to her, leaves his finest manor house to their child, even though he is not (*unbeknownst* to him) the one who had fathered the child.
- 296–410 The Widow now discusses her second marriage, to a wealthy middle-aged merchant whom she considered her social inferior.
- 298–302 Here the Widow lists the several ways in which she believed herself to be her husband's superior; and she says she made sure that he never forgot it.
- 305 I.e., "I appeared to be very vivacious by the time I had reached the age of maturity." The phrase *perfit eald* refers to the age at which a person is considered legally competent; for a girl this was usually twelve, for a boy fourteen.
- 307–08 She suggests that this clergyman has gone on to achieve considerable prominence in the church, a subtle piece of anti-clerical satire on Dunbar's part.
- 309 *I gert the batham obey.* This verse, as well as many others, reflects her condescending attitude toward her lowly "shopkeeper" of a husband.
- 316 *never bor in a gentill bert is generit ony rulh.* This verse echoes the famous line used several times in *The Canterbury Tales* that "picee renmeth soone in gentil berie" (I[A]1761). The Widow's mercy, however, is motivated by something other than her innate nobility. Compare "To a Lady" (Poem 63), lines 41–42.
- 319 "He daed not disregard my summons." The Widow's statement, couched in legal terminology, demonstrates her practical wisdom in dealing with the exigencies of experience.
- 321–28 The Widow's comments on her "womanly nature" are similar to sentiments expressed by the Wife of Bath — that those things that are easily attained are soon despised, while things difficult to attain are greatly desired; compare the Wife of Bath in CT III(D)617–24.
- 323 *or I him faish gaif.* I.e., "before I was betrothed to him."
- 331 *I wold haif ridden him to Rose with raij in his heid.* The Widow's denunciation of her husband, reflected in the image of her riding him like a bridled horse, reverses the usual relationship between the sexes during the Middle Ages. It certainly calls

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to mind the popular imagery of the ridden man (for example, Aristotle and Phyllis) as a misogynist visualization of women's wiles; for more on the trope, see Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 124–51. The phrase to *Rome* implies a very great distance (compare Whiting R182); Rome was also an important pilgrimage site for medieval Christians, one of several visited by the Wife of Bath.

- 332     *Wer not ruffill of my renoun and rumour of pepill.* The Widow's hostility toward her husband, she says, was only held in check by her fear of public opinion.
- 338     *Ale burrow lawdr.* "Tallburgh buildings"; probably tenements within the city. The Widow's husband obviously had extensively property holdings.
- 344–48     The Widow has concealed her true attitude toward her husband until the legal documents conferring his property on her child were signed, sealed, and delivered. Then she permits her pent-up anger to erupt.
- 347     *bascibles.* The word's meaning is debated, but it seems to be a legal term pertaining to the transfer of property or money.
- 351–52     The reversal of their sex-roles has now been completed.
- 355–57     The Widow's husband has become a thoroughly subdued, properly behaving packhorse; he is no longer one that casts the baskets slung across his back into the midden (line 355), or that is skittish or nervous or skips to the side (line 357).
- 362     *lombart.* "Basker" or "financier"; the term derives from Lombardy, an important center of banking during the later Middle Ages. Compare *Piers Plowman* C.4.194.
- 379     *puko.* The peacock was a traditional symbol of vanity; compare Whiting P280, and CT II(A)3926, describing Symkyn in *The Reeve's Tale*.
- 382     *papingay.* The popinjay or parrot, like the peacock, was deemed vain and proud of its colorful plumage, as well as being a bird given to the pursuit of sensuous pleasures. In contrast, the husband is called a *pliskit herle* ("plucked heron"), a bird that has been stripped bare. Herons were often hunted in falconry.
- 384     *maid a stahwart staff to strik himselfe diane.* Compare the proverbial saying, "to make a rod with which to beat yourself"; Whiting S652.

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 84*

- 389 *riving.* A euphemism for her sex organs. The Wife of Bath uses similar euphemisms: e.g., "oure bothe thynges smale / Were ek to knowe a femele from a male" (*CT* III[D]121–22); and "For if I wolde sellie my hele chose, / I koude walke as fresh as is a rose" (*CT* III[D]447–48).
- 403 *his first wif.* Her husband, we here learn, was himself a widower when the Widow married him; this fact lends greater poignancy to her efforts to gain for her own children all of his money and property, while depriving the children of his first marriage of their inheritance.
- 405 *heid at feid.* Literally "had at feud" but probably meaning "held in contempt." Compare Holland's *Howlat*, line 61.
- 408–09 "And yet these wise men, they know that all evil wives are given to such behavior and recognized for behaving in such a fashion" — i.e., their cruel treatment of their stepchildren.
- 410–14 Compare the sentiments of Sprowtak in Hentysen's fable of the "Cock and the Fox," *Fables*, lines 509–22.
- 412 Ironically, the verse carries religious overtones; compare "Be myrrifull now at all your myght, / For passit is your dally nyght" in "On the Nativity of Christ" (Poem 1), lines 36–37.
- 415–21 The Widow's false mourning has many literary counterparts, but compare especially the Wife of Bath, *CT* III(D)587–92.
- 423 *As fose in a lambis fleise.* A proverbial expression that originates in Matthew 7:15; compare Whiting W474. Compare also "Tidings from the Session" (Poem 74), line 37, and "A Wooing in Dunsfermyle" (Poem 69), line 59.
- 424–25 The Widow's book is probably an illuminated book of hours; she carries it more as a symbol of her noble status — i.e., for show — rather than for devotional purposes.
- 429 *best brawn.* I.e., "the most brawny" or "the best muscled"; brawn originally referred to the chest muscles of a bear, but the word came to mean "brawny" in general.
- 430–31 "Or [who] has been made most powerfully to furnish a banquet / in Venus' chamber" — colorful sexual metaphors. Compare "To the Queen" (Poem 70), line 7.

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- 433–34 Compare the description of Chaucer's Criseyde in *TC* 1.174–75.
- 437–39 Women were often thought to have the ability to shed tears whenever necessary — the Wife of Bath even calls weeping one of God's three gifts to women (*CT* III[D]401) — but the Widow's tears seems to need a bit of extra help — what A. A. MacDonald wittily calls "do-it-yourself lachrymosity" (1994, p. 268).
- 443 *perle of plesance*. Compare the opening verse of the ME *Pearl*: "Perle, plesante to prynces paye."
- 444 Compare "Womēn are in churche saints, abroad angels, at hōme devils" (Tilley W702).
- 452 *be/uisip*. "Fool" or "deceive," often implying "to cuckold" or deceive sexually; compare *CT* IX(H)144–45.
- 460 *Faith has a fair name bot fulþeild faris heitir*. This verse sounds very much like a proverbial expression.
- 464 *happy*. I.e., "good-fortuned" or "lucky" or "well-off."
- 465 The Widow heaps scorn upon the woman who has reached the age of a hundred but continues to be a foolish girl in regard to the strategies of love and sex, especially the importance of keeping it secret. Barcuff notes that "this perverts a much-glossed scriptural text (Isaiah 65:20)" (Bw 2.294).
- 471 *solace under seik*. "Joy beneath my gown" — i.e., good sex; there is clever word-play on her "cair under cloke" (line 470) during the day and her "joy under gown" during the night.
- 476–502 In her grand finale, the Widow touts her ability to satisfy a *thik thrang* ("thick throng" — line 488) of would-be wooers simultaneously. Like the Wife of Bath, who "ne loved nevere by no discrecion, / But evere folwede myn appetit, / Al were he short, or long, or blak, or whi" (*CT* III[D]622–24), the Widow is also happy to bestow her favors upon virtually all comers, regardless of their social rank (lines 497–508).

*Explanatory Notes to Poem 84*

- 479 *And fyllis me wyne wantonly with weifair and joy.* Perhaps pertinent here is the Wife of Bath's observation that "In woomen violeint is no defencē," for "A likerous mouth mouē han a likerous tayl" (*CT* III[D]467, 466).
- 484 Serving and carving at table were important social skills, and these duties were often performed by youthful squires such as Chaucer's Squire (*CT* II[A]99–100).
- 485–86 This vulgar behavior stands in stark contrast to the genteel behavior in the preceding verse.
- 489 *fair calling.* "Warm welcome"; compare the figure of Bialacoil in *RR*, and *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), line 188.
- 497–502 Kinsley argues that in these verses the Widow's salon "is exposed as a brothel" (K, p. 273); more likely, though, the Widow is having a good time parading before her friends as a woman with voracious appetites and a sexual ego to match.
- 498 *luſtwhiffit.* I.e., "love without being loved in returned"; this is a common phrase to describe unrequited love.
- 500 *That he be lost or with me lak, his lyf shall not danger.* One of the standard clichés of courtly love poetry was that the wooper would die if his ardor was not satisfied. Chaucer also parodies this sentiment with "hende" Nicholas' remark to Alioun, "Ywis, but if ich have my wille, / For deerne love of thee, leteman, I spille" (*CT* II[A]3277–78).
- 501–02 The Widow, wittingly or unwittingly, is parodying the Beatitude from the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).
- 502 *Sabor.* The best explanation is that this means "God" and is derived from the biblical phrase *Dominus Sabaoth* ("Lord God of Hosts") in Isaías 1:9, Romans 9:29, etc. Also, Bawcutt notes that in "Bartholomaeus Anglicus," l. 19, on the names of God: "the thridde name is Sabaoth" (Bw 2.295).
- 504 *legrand.* "Story," but also carrying the ironic meaning of "saint's life." Compare the comment of the merchant's wife to the monk in Chaucer's Shipeman's Tale: "Thasne wolde I tellē a legende of my lyf / What I have suffred sith I was a wyf" (*CT* VIII[B<sup>2</sup>]145–46).

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- 507-08 The practice of women being instructed by the secret teachings of other women and then following their advice is also reflected in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*: "I folwed ay my dames loore, / As wel of this as of oþere thynges moore" (CT III[D]583-84).
- 512-22 The narrator returns to the opening description of nature in all of its beauty and perfection, completing the framework which surrounds the women's conversation.
- 515 *Silver schuris*. These are drops of dew. Compare *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), line 14.
- 516-18 The birds rejoice at the coming of the dawn. Compare *The Golden Targe* (Poem 65), lines 20-21.
- 522 *kindill agane his carage thought it wer cald slokneyt*. In light of all that the narrator has just overheard, his *carage* — his sexual vitality — might well have "slackened cold" and require some "rekindling."
- 523 *ruis thir ryall rosis in ther riche weðis*. The irony in this line, too, is inescapable.
- 525 *I all prevely past to a plesand arber*. Could he now be occupying the very place in which the women were recently disporting themselves — a kind of amusing effort at appropriation of their private domain?
- 526 *with my pen did report*. I.e., "recorded in writing"; Dunbar also uses the phrase in line 69 of "A Wooing in Dunfermline" (Poem 69). (There may be some irony in the fact that earlier in the poem the word "pen" — line 135 — had been used to refer to the penis.)
- 527-30 Here the narrator, or perhaps Dunbar, presents his audience with the traditional *demande d'amore* — "which of these three lively ladies would you wish to marry?" The answer, of course, is not hard to come by. The ironic use of this device may have a parallel in the Franklin's question at the conclusion to his tale: "Lordynges, this question, thanne, wol I aske now, / Which was the mooste fte, as thynketh yow?" (CT V[F]1621-22).

### *Textual Notes*

**Abbreviations:** See Explanatory Notes.

- Poem 1** Base Text: *Bannatyne MS*, fols. 27r–27v.  
8 *pwer*. MS: *power*. I follow the Vulgate spelling, as do Mc, K, Bw.  
24 Refrain abbreviated. So also with lines 32 and 40.  
33 *fowlis*. MS: *flour canceled*; *fowlis* written after.  
45–46 These verses are written in the margin.  
51 *fische*. So Bw. MS: *fiche*, corrected to *fische*. Mc, K read *fische*.  
**Colophon** *Finis. Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 2** Base Text: *Maitland Folio*, pp. 293–97; with emendations from *Asloan MS*, fols. 290v–292r and *Arundel MS*, fols. 168r–170r.  
3 *And knelit*. So As, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *And kneling*.  
19 *rage*. So As and Ar, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *rage*.  
42 *syne*. So Mc. MS: *syn*, followed by K, Bw.  
51 *to*. So As, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *he*.  
57 *bak*. MS: *hayrh canceled before*.  
59 *hyd*. So As, followed by K, Bw. MS: *syl*, followed by Mc.  
70 *Him all nakt*. So As and Ar, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *at him all nathing*.  
77 *and*. Cancelled in MS, but I follow As in retaining it.  
94 *As martir*. So As, followed by Mc, K. MS: *Ase martirdome*, followed by Bw.  
96 As ends here with *Explicit Dunbar*.  
103 *blady*. So Ar. MS: *ane wound*, followed by Mc, K. Bw substitutes *blady* for *ane*.  
117 *The Lord*. So Ar, followed by Bw. MS: *That schort*, followed by Mc, K.  
129 *Grace*. So Ar, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Gredige*.  
139 *that steid*. MS: *part thair canceled before*.  
**Colophon** *Finis quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 3** Base Text: *Bannatyne MS*, fol. 35r.  
2 *confosurit*. MS: *com* canceled before.  
11 *his*. MS: *be* canceled before.  
13 *clowis*. So K, Bw. MS: *clown*, followed by Mc.

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- 16 Refrain is abbreviated. So also with lines 24 and 32.  
20 *ar a gyane*. So K, Bw, MS; *ar gyane*, followed by Mc.  
Colophon *Finis quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 4** Base Text: Asloan MS, fols. 303r-304v.  
11 *mater*. The last three letters are barely legible in the MS, but all modern editors  
(Mc, K, Bw) read *mater*.  
36 *irke*. MS: if canceled before.  
63 *wyce*. So Mc, K, MS: *wyce*, followed by Bw, who glosses "wise".  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 5** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fol. 278v.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 6** Base Text: Arundel MS, fols. 161r-162v.  
8 *thee*. Supplied, following Mc. K, Bw supply *the*.  
11 *that*. Supplied, following Mc, K. Bw follows MS.  
14 *confessour*. So K, Bw, MS: *confessour*, followed by Mc.  
19 *schrijf*. So Mc, K, Bw, MS: *schrijf*.  
48 *hert*. Supplied, following Mc, K, Bw.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 7** Base Text: Arundel MS, fols. 1r-4v; emendations from Bannatyne MS, fols.  
17v-19v & Maitland Folio, pp. 199-203.  
4 *schryne*. K reads *schrifte*. MS: *schrif*.  
7 *Thy*. MS: *my* canceled before.  
10 *Thy*. Supplied from B, BD, MF, following Mc, K, Bw.  
excelling. So MF, followed by Mc, Bw. K reads *exelling*. MS: *excellent*.  
18 *Synnis*. So MS, followed by K, Bw. Mc reads *synys*.  
*schrijf*. So MS, followed by K, Bw. Mc reads *schirryve*.  
27 *nor*. So B, BD, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *je*.  
30 *the deid*. So B, BD, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw, MS: *I did*.  
33 *Marey*. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Mary*.  
*Spirituall*. MS: *and* canceled before.  
34 *teching*. MS: *consall* canceled before.  
35 *nor*. MS: *r* added above the line.  
37 *soulis*. MS: *we* canceled before.

*Textual Notes*

- 37 *preaching*. So K. MS: *peching*. Bw follows B, BD, MF: *Nor into sandis support of my praying*. Mc reads (without explanation): *Nor to my ryghtboris support of my praying*.
- 43 *Excarist*. So K., Bw. MS: *macrist*. Mc reads *Holy Supper* from B, BD.
- excellence. So K., Bw. MS: *exelling*. Emendation based on rhyme; the line is not in MF.
- 44 *Pennence*. So K., Bw. MS: *pennice*.
- 45 *Matremosity*. So K., Bw. MS: *Matromosity*.
- 63 *pointis*. So K., Bw. Mc reads *payntis*. MS: *pointis*.
- 70 *quahair*. So Mc., K., Bw. MS: *quaier*.
- 71 *befoir*. So Mc., Bw. MS: *befor*, followed by K.
- 85-86 These verses are transposed in MS. See Mc., Bw. The lines are not in MF, B, BD.
- 99 *remembering*. So Mc., K., Bw. MS: *remembering*.
- 100 *Hevinnis*. So K. MS five minims rather than six. Mc reads *hevenis*; Bw reads *hevinnis*.
- hiddous feid. So B, MF, followed by Mc., K., Bw. BD: *hiddous sede*. MS: *having confide*.
- 111 *on Rude*. Supplied from B, BD, MF, followed by Mc., K., Bw.
- redewring*. So B, BD, MF, followed by Mc., K., Bw. MS: *redempcion*.
- 122-23 These verses are transposed in MS.
- 123 *gud*. So B, followed by Mc. MS: *my*, followed by K., Bw.
- 125 Miswritten line is canceled and then written correctly.
- inuenconis bresyng*. So B, BD, MF, followed by Mc., Bw. MS: *inuenconis ledyng* (after canceled line), followed by K.
- 129 *Oy*. So B, BD, MF, followed by Mc., K., Bw. MS: *O*.
- 141-42 These verses are transposed in MS. So K. Bw orders the lines 139, 141, 140, 142; Mc uses this same order but follows B line 140 (*In hert or slowchter, gif I be*) as line 141.
- 147 *as echo*. So B, BD, MF, followed by Mc., K., Bw. MS: *eschew*.
- welpe*. So K. Mc reads *weip*. MS: *veipe*, followed by Bw.
- 155 *unmanerlyit*. So Bw. MS: *unmanerit*. Mc follows B, BD: *unmenheit*, glossing "unnamed." K reads *unmanerit*.
- 156 *Bot felling*. So Bw. K reads *Bot feiling*. Mc follows B, BD: *Bot fall in*.
- 157 *hert a*. So B, BD, followed by Mc., Bw. MS: *hertis*, followed by K.
- 166 *saillir*. So Mc. MS: *saillir*, followed by K., Bw.
- 168 *I cry*. So K. MS: *I cry*. B, BD, MF: *That crys*, followed by Mc., Bw.
- laser*. So K., Bw. Mc reads *laxar*. MS: *I laser*.
- Cloophon** *Heir ends the tabell of confessours compilit by Mr William Dusber*.

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- Poem 8** Base Text: *Barnatyne MS*, fol. 48v.  
8 Refrain abbreviated. So also with lines 20, 28, 32, 36.  
34 Written to the right of line 33 in MS.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 9** Base Text: *Barnatyne MS*, fols. 47r-47v; emendations from *Maitland Folio*, pp. 193-94.  
28 *that all devouris.* Added in a later hand in MS.  
44 *dryve.* Supplied from MF, following Mc, K, Bw.  
Colophon *Finis quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 10** Base Text: *Maitland Folio*, p. 326.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 11** Base Text: *Maitland Folio*, pp. 195-96.  
22 *dissolvit.* MS: *no* canceled before.  
Colophon *Finis quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 12** Base Text: *Maitland Folio*, p. 310.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 13** Base Text: *Maitland Folio*, pp. 5-6; emendations from *Maitland Folio b*, p. 315.  
1 *world.* MS: *I* inserted above the line.  
7 *reounow.* MS: written in the margin to correct *reounone.*  
16 Verse supplied from MFb, following Mc, K, Bw; it has been cut away in MS.  
17 *cairis.* MS: *ch* canceled before.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 14** Base Text: The Rouen Print, b3r-b4v; emendations from *Barnatyne MS*, fols. 109r-110r and *Maitland Folio*, pp. 189-92.  
8 Refrain abbreviated here and in most subsequent stanzas.  
9 *and.* In several instances MF reads *et* for *and.* See also lines 17, 18, 22, 38, 42, 51,  
54 (twice), 58, 59, and 69.  
15 *vanite.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *vaunte.*  
17 *Onte.* So Mc, Bw. K: *One to.* Print: *Oe*, with a macron over the *e.*  
21 *brychtis.* So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *beythis.*  
26 *Takis.* So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *Tak.*  
or, So Mc, Bw. K: *one.* Print: *oe*, with a macron over the *e.*  
34 *clerk.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *clerk.*

### Textual Notes

- 46 pageant. So Print, followed by Mc, K. Bw follows B, MF: *paðknis*.  
49 *hes.* So Mc. Print: *haer*, followed by K, Bw.  
62 *thor.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *taht*.  
70 *Slaine.* So Mc, Bw, K: *Slone*. Print: *Slome*.  
71 *fle.* So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *only*.  
Colophon *Quod Dumbar quaten he wes sek.*

- Poem 15** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 318–19.  
5 *sangis.* So Mc, K, MS: *sangs*, followed by Bw.  
6 *Iesthin.* Bw reads *Ienthin*.  
43 *blyz.* So Mc, K, Bw, MS: *blyz*.  
Colophon *Quod Dumbar.*

- Poem 16** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fol. 84r–85r; emendations from Maitland Folio, pp. 331–33.  
10 *may.* So MF, followed by Mc, Bw. MS: *ma*, followed by K.  
15 Refrain abbreviated here and in all subsequent stanzas.  
26 *nobilite.* So MF, followed by Mc, Bw. MS: *nobilie*. K reads *nobilitie*.  
37 *Jordir.* So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *ford*.  
38 *Trewihe.* So MF, followed by Mc, Bw. MS: *treweth*, followed by K.  
39 Honour. Supplied from MF, followed by K. Mc, Bw reject MS line entirely and follow MF: *Erylir is honour of the tour*, thereby avoiding the Latinate *et al* of MS.  
43 *Iskir.* So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *hole*.  
47 *haertir.* So MS, followed by K, MF: *hartir*, followed by Mc, Bw.  
48 *ar maid of bles.* So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *of amiable blyth*.  
72 *mast.* Supplied from MF, following Mc, K, Bw.  
84 *Tu regni de imperium.* So MS, followed by K, MF: *Bot me ressive in regnum nrum*, followed by Mc, Bw.  
Colophon *Finis quod Dumbar.*

- Poem 17** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fol. 98v; emendations from Maitland Folio, p. 337.  
8 *it.* Supplied from MF, following Mc, K, Bw.  
11 *mar.* So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *men*.  
15 Refrain abbreviated here and in subsequent stanzas.  
16 *Qaha.* Corrected from *Qulen* in MS.  
39 *frasedfæll.* MS: *d* inserted above the line.  
Colophon *Quod Dumbar.*

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- Poem 18** Base Text: Maitland Folio, p. 307; emendations from Reidpath.  
18 moist salt. So R, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *salt sonant it.*  
28 *ut impens.* So MS, followed by Mc, K, R: *wi be lost,* followed by Bw.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 19** Base Text: Abesdeas Minst Book, III, pp. 321–22; emendations from Barnatyne  
MS, fol. 98r–98v.  
5 nycht. Supplied from B, following Mc, K, Bw.  
23 michtely. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *michely.*  
28 thar. Supplied from B, following Mc, K, Bw.  
29 *uthir's cum.* So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *uthir.*  
31 Verse supplied from B, following Mc, Bw. K follows MF with *Thair fair be glaid,*  
and *spend with mirrie face.*  
37 ragment. So B, followed by Mc, K. Bw reads *regimen.* MS: *regiment.*  
39 ar oxy. So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *jar.*
- Poem 20** Base Text: Barnatyne MS, fol. 115v–116c.  
15 Refrain is abbreviated here and in line 20.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 21** Base Text: Barnatyne MS, fol. 136r–136v. Bw uses MF as base text.  
7 *it.* MS: *it* canceled before.  
8 quaffil. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: altered to *quafur.*  
12 Refrain is abbreviated here and in lines 16, 20, 24, 28, and 36.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 22** Base Text: Barnatyne MS, fol. 64v–65r.  
12 Refrain abbreviated here and in lines 16, 28, 32, 36, and 40.  
20 Bw follows MF for this line: *It now bot cair and covetyce.*  
29 heill. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *eill.*  
30 said. MS: *said* canceled before.  
Colophon *Finis.*
- Poem 23** Base Text: Barnatyne MS, fol. 63v–64r.  
8 that. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *I.*  
18 he. So MFb, followed by K. MS: *he*, followed by Mc, Bw as a regular spelling  
for “he,” though not an eye-rhyme.  
21 I. Supplied from MF, following Mc, K, Bw.  
32 streiche. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *scrachie.*

### *Textual Notes*

40           *tyme.* Supplied from MF, following Mc, K, Bw.  
Colophon   *Finit quod Dumbar.*

**Poem 24** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 323–24, but with the sequence of stanzas following the arrangement in the Bannatyne MS (fols. 65v–66v). In Maitland the sequence is 1–25, 36–40, 26–30, 31–35, 41–50. The fourth stanza in Maitland is here deleted, also in accordance with Bannatyne.

3           Bw follows B: *I can not leif in no degré.*

6           and. So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *ave.* Bw follows B for the entire line: *Gif  
I be galland, hasty, and blyth.*

14           *lad.* So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *laid.*

16           A stanza in MF is here deleted; as K observes, this stanza is not integral and disturbs the rhetorical pattern of the poem; this stanza, which is here printed (punctuation added), is not found in B:

*Se I liberall, gentil, and kynd,  
Thocle I is talk of nobill strynd,  
sit will thai say, baythe he and he,  
son man is lyke out of his mynd:  
Lord god, how sall I gowerne me?*

19           This line supplied from B, following Mc, K, Bw.

31           *gif.* So K, Bw. B: *than,* followed by Mc.

31–35       This stanza appears as stanza number six in MF, with a different first line: *And gif  
sun tyme rewarde gif I.*

Colophon   *Finit quod Dumbar.*

**Poem 25** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fols. 68r–69r.

4           *speiche.* So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *speice.*

10           *frewthy.* MS: *f* canceled before.

14           *syle.* So Mc, Bw. MS: *ryld* is corrected to *syle*, though K reads *ryld.*

40           *can.* So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *gan.*

46           *do.* So K, Bw. MS: *to,* followed by Mc.

Colophon   *Finit quod Dumbar.*

**Poem 26** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fols. 61r–61v, with emendations from Maitland Folio, pp. 259–60.

7           *Gif me.* So Mc, K. MF: *Gif me, gif me,* followed by Bw.

*rane.* So MF, followed by Mc, Bw. MS: *drene,* followed by K.

15           Refrain is abbreviated here and in lines 30 and 35.

16–20       This stanza is omitted in MF.

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- 24 serve. So Mc, K, MF: ruffine, followed by Bw.  
33 or. So Mc, K, MF, BD: bsr, followed by Bw.  
36 Ye. Separated within the line by virgates.  
38 tyme. MS: thu canceled before.  
43 Gife. So Mc, K, Bw reads Gyf.  
44 fecht. So Mc, K, MF: flytt, followed by Bw.  
Colophon *Finis of asking. Followis discrecion of giving.*

- Poem 27** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fols. 61v-62v, with emendations from Maitland Folio,  
pp. 260-61.  
11 and sum for threat. So MF, followed by K, Bw. Mc omits and. MS: sum chereit,  
with chereit corrected from chereite.  
15 Refrain abbreviated here and in lines 20, 30, 35, 45, 50, and 55.  
23 And for a. So Mc, K, BD: And for sic, followed by Bw.  
he. So MF, followed by Mc, K, MS: hie, followed by Bw.  
31-35 This stanza is lacking in MF.  
34 His. So Mc, K, Bw, MS: hs.  
36 faces. So MF, followed by K, Bw, MS: face, followed by Mc.  
38 servandis. So Mc, K, Bw, MS: servandis.  
48 he. So Mc, K, MS: hie, followed by Bw. The whole line in MF reads he ken wull  
the contrarie.  
51 shewis. So MF, followed by Mc, Bw. K reads lewis. MS: gud lewis.  
53 knaiffis. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw reads knavis. MS: knave hit.  
59 he na wit thame offe. So MF, followed by Mc, K. Bw emends to thame na wit his  
thame. MS: he na wit his thame.  
Colophon *Finis of discretion of giving. Followis discretion in taking.*

- Poem 28** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fols. 62v-63r.  
16 mens. So Bw, Mc, K follow MF: mens.  
19 Quahill. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw, MS: Quahill.  
20 Refrain abbreviated here and in lines 25 and 30.  
21 sum. Supplied, following K.  
32 Bw follows MF: And not hit can be satisfied.  
37 Ar. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw, MS: Ar.  
38 And peur. So Mc, K, MF: Quhair smail, followed by Bw.  
Colophon *Finis quod Dunbar.*

- Poem 29** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 9-10.  
8 Ane. So K. The parchment is blemished. Mc and Bw read A.

### *Textual Notes*

- 8      *prosperitid*. MS: *sp* canceled before.
- 10–11     Full line cancellation of *The theologgis servaw*, due to eyeskip.
- 11      *philosophical*. MS: *off* canceled before.
- 12      *astronomy*. K reads *astronomy*. Mc, Bw read *astromonic*.
- 13      *fable*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *fable*.
- 14      *selfe*. So Mc, Bw. MS: *selff*. K reads *self*.
- 15      *flouris*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *floriz*.
- 20      *owr*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *jour*.
- 21      *fructar is your*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: corrected to *vain is all your*, but the original reading is preferable.
- Colophon     *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 30**     Base Text: *Bannaryne* MS, fols. 342v–345r.
- 45–46     B repeats the phrase *full hestely* (*full hestely besene / . . . full hestely I wen*). Most editors treat the repetition as eyeskip error and alter one line or the other. Bw emends line 45 to *full fresche and weill besene*; Mc emends line 46 to *efir hir I went*, followed by K.
- 67      *scharp*. Not in MS. Schipper's emendation, followed by K, to repair the meter.
- 81      *seche*. So MS, followed by Bw. Mc, K emend to *feche*, an attractive alternative.
- 92      *full*. MS: corrected from *wet*; *wes* added after *terrible*.
- 104     *chief*. So K. MS: *cheif*, followed by Mc, Bw.
- the woldis. MS omits *the*, followed by Mc, K, Bw.
- 111     *for*. MS: *fow* canceled before.
- 115     *le*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *la*.
- 119     *parcere*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *procir*.
- 124     *wycht*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *wyghtcht*.
- 135     *bold*. So Bw. MS: *thow bold*, followed by Mc, K.
- 143     *thyne*. So Mc, K. Bw reads *rhy*.
- 155     *clarefeld*. MS: *clarf* canceled before.
- 182     *Chryst*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Orlyst*.
- 184     *awosik*. MS: *wen* canceled before.
- Colophon     *Explicit quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 31**     Base Text: British Library Royal MS 58, fols. 17v–18r.
- 15      *spreit*. So K. MS: *septe*. Mc reads *secrete*.
- Poem 32**     Base Text: Aberdeen Minute Book, II, p. 460.
- Colophon     *quod Dunbar.*

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- Poem 33** Base Text: Reidpath MS, fol. 7r-7v.  
3 uplyst. Supplied, following Bw. Mc, K add *ascender*.  
26 with. MS: with is written twice.  
33 stair. So Mc, K. MS *star*, followed by Bw.  
35 forge. MS: *full* canceled before.  
37 roysell Stewartis. Supplied, following K. Laing conjectured *nobilis Stewartis*,  
followed by Mc. Bw emends to *stol eyell*.  
43 gold. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: cold.  
44 all browderit. So R, followed by Mc, Bw. K emends to *browulerit all*.  
bravelie. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *brav*; with a prior cancellation. Emendation based  
on thyme.  
47 halsand. MS: *husband*; I follow Bw's emendation; Mc and K emend to *hal sand*.  
51 playit. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *palyit*.  
54 schene. Supplied, following Mc, K, Bw.  
63 Coverit. MS is corrected from *Cayneit*.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 34** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fol. 238v.  
10 day the. MS is defective; I follow K's (and Laing's) emendation. Mc omits.  
21 person. MS: *renoun* canceled before.  
24 Refrain is abbreviated.  
37 wyse and trew. MS: *fair of hew* canceled before.  
38 out all. Written twice in MS.  
Colophon *Finis.*
- Poem 35** Base Text: Chapman & Myllar Print, pp. 171-74.  
56 glorie. So Mc, K. Print: *gloire*, followed by Bw.  
63 fortunate. Print: *fortunable*, followed by Mc, K, Bw.  
69 knyghtherid. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *knyghteid*.
- Poem 36** Base Text: Reidpath MS, fol. 6v-7r.  
3 Stewart. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *stewar*.  
7 his. Inserted above the line in MS.  
13 Tarkas. So K. MS: *tark*, followed by Mc, Bw.  
21 stair. So Mc, K. MS: *stair*, followed by Bw.  
23 choir. So Mc, K. MS: *schoir*, followed by Bw.  
32 chavelrie. So Bw. Mc, K: *chavelrie*. MS: *chabelrie*.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*

### Textual Notes

- Poem 37** Base Text: Reidpath MS, fols. 2v–3r.  
11 *Evir*, MS; and canceled before.  
16 *New*. Supplied, following Mc, K, Bw.  
Colophon *Quod Dumbar.*
- Poem 38** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 194–95.  
7 *hard*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *harr*.  
Colophon *Finis quod Dumbar.*
- Poem 39** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fols. 113v–114r.  
15 Refrain abbreviated here and in line 25.  
Colophon *Quod Dumbar to the king.*
- Poem 40** Base Text: Maitland Folio, p. 316 (MFb); emendations from Maitland Folio a, p. 7.  
1 *of*. Supplied from MFa, following Mc, K, Bw.  
8 *first*. So MS, followed by K. Mc, Bw follow MFa; *brist*.  
Colophon *Quod Dumbar quhone many Benefices valit.*
- Poem 41** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 321–22 (MFb); emendations from Maitland Folio a, pp. 8–9.  
8 *rhame*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *rhave*. So, too, lines 10, 13, 15, 18, and 20.  
17 *sprauld* . . . *mett*. So MFa, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *spendix* . . . *mett*.  
26 *warryit*. So MFa, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: variant.  
27 Bw follows MFa and R: *That men off it are never content.*  
Colophon *Quod Dumbar.*
- Poem 42** Base Text: Reidpath MS, fols. 3v–5r.  
13 *This*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Thas*.  
14 *fiendlic*. So K, Bw. MS: *freindlic*, followed by Mc.  
19 *eik*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *ek*.  
*Hivener*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Hivensis*.  
23 *so*. MS: *full corrected to so*.  
25 *heid*. Bw emends to *weid*, which makes good sense in terms of the withering metaphor and the pattern of alliteration.  
28 *Saying*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Seing*.  
29 *se*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *si*.  
36 *glader wox*. So Mc, K. MS: *glader war*. Bw reads *glader vox*, the sense being “became more glad.”  
38 *lady*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *lay*.

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- 39      *fellis*. MS: corrected from *fallis*.  
40      *wecr*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *wicht*,  
41      *malady*. So Mc, K. MS: *melody*, followed by Bw.  
42      *air*. Supplied, following Mc, K, Bw.  
43      *xald*. MS: corrected from *al*.  
44      *Thy*. MS: corrected from *The*.  
45      *evir*. MS: corrected from *near*.  
46      *first*. MS: corrected from *be*.  
47      *quoth*. So Mc, K, Bw emends to *quod*. MS: *with*.  
48      *dies*. MS: corrected from *dres*.  
49      *Inopportunitie*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Inapornunitie*.  
50      *sun*. Written above the line in MS.  
51      *me*. MS: *said* canceled after.  
52      *humelie*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: altered to *heinelle*.  
53      *full*. MS: *knew* canceled, *full* written above.  
54      *He*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *je*.  
55      *rak*. MS: altered to *cruk* or *trak*.  
56      *anon*. MS: corrected from *awen*.  
Colophon      *Quod Dunbar*.

- Poem 43**      Base Text: Reidpath MS, fol. 6r.  
5      *scant*. Interlined.  
11      *oft*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *off*.  
Colophon      *Quod Dunbar*.

- Poem 44**      Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 178-81.  
13      An extra *fell* deleted before *Labour*.  
17      *all*. MS: *one* canceled before.  
38      *the father*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *air father*.  
67      *all the*. MS: repeated and then canceled.  
76      Refrain abbreviated here and in lines 80 and 84.  
81      *it*. Supplied, following Mc, K, Bw.  
Colophon      *Finiz quod Dunbar*.

- Poem 45**      Base Text: Maitland Folio, p. 8 (MFa).  
6      *Qwhill*. So MFB, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Qwhilk*.  
7      *singir*. MS: *i* canceled after.  
Colophon      *Quod Dunbar*.

### Textual Notes

- Poem 46** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 196–98.  
10 *fingaris*. Preceded by a blank space in MS.  
11 *carmaris*. MS: *carpentaris* canceled before.  
36 *eik*. Corrected from *reik* in MS.  
65 *nyce*. MS: *y* canceled before.  
79 *mind*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *synd*.  
85 *Or*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Anl*.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 47** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 16–18.  
4 *All*. Corrected from *Anl* in MS.  
16 *Coskis*. Corrected from *Coath quhenis* in MS.  
19 *cakoun*. So R, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *cakoun*.  
21 *afyowris*. So Mc, K. MS: *afyowris*, followed by Bw.  
21 *mantis*. Corrected from *kyoud* in MS.  
43 *old*. So R, followed by Bw. MS: *all*, followed by Mc, K.  
53 *clatis*. MS: *plasse* canceled before.  
56 *beir*. So Mc, K, R: *bere*, followed by Bw. MS: *be*.  
64 *Nobles*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Anl nobles*.  
70 *That lang*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: words are faded.  
71 *I be*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: words are faded.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar dicit.*
- Poem 48** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 295–96; emendations from Bannatyne MS, fols. 94v–95v.  
1 *yit*. So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *je*.  
23 *archef*. So B, followed by Mc, K. MS: *bat greif*, followed by Bw.  
33 *Ryne of Rauf Colyard*. So B, followed by Mc, K. MS: *Raf Colyearis dynd*, followed by Bw.  
41 *suld*. so Mc, Bw. MS: *sould*, followed by K.  
76–85 Recorded on p. 309 in MF; leaf misplaced.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 49** Base Text: Maitland Folio, p. 18 (for lines 1–32); Reidpath MS, fols. 1r–1v (for lines 33–76).  
1 *toome*. So R, followed by K, Bw. MS: *roume*.  
3 *jald over*. MS: *jald axir* canceled and rewritten as *jald over*. Bw reads *jald over*.  
5 *Strenever*. So K, Bw. MS: *Streneverne*.  
7–8 The burden, repeated at the end of each stanza, is abbreviated in both MSS.

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- 30 Verse is faded in MS.
- 32 MF ends here (subsequent quire is lacking).
- 33–76 Verses supplied from R.
- 39 *curage*. Written above canceled *plese* in MS.
- 52 *cast*. Inserted above the line in MS.
- 63 *cleggir*. MS: altered from *chappisid*.
- Colophon *Qued Dunbar*.
- Poem 50** Base Text: Reidpath, fols. 3e–3v; emendations from Bannatyne MS, fol. 66v.  
4 *And*. MS: *gerr* deleted after.
- 7 *he*. Supplied from B, following K, Bw. Mc omits.
- 10 *hasty*. So B, BD, followed by K, Bw. MS: *nobil*, followed by Mc.
- 15 *wame*. So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *vane*.
- 23 *Qwha*. So B, BD, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Qwhar*.
- 28–30 These lines are not in B or BD. Mc ignores the refrain and ends at line 28. K, following B, ends at line 24. Bw follows MS, as do I.
- Colophon *Qued Dunbar*.
- Poem 51** Base Text: Maidland Folio, pp. 334–35; emendations from Bannatyne MS, fols. 133e–134r.  
2 *sterris*. B: *sternis*, followed by Mc, K, Bw.
- 16 *the*. So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw on metrical grounds. Omitted in MS.
- 31 *Saturnas*. So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Satennis*.
- 35 *wondrus*. So MS. B reads *windir*, followed by Mc, K, Bw on grounds that *wondrus* is a modernization. But the OED cites an example of *wondrus* in 1509. B's *windir* means "strange, marvellous," and could well be the more likely reading. See Poem 52, line 13.
- Colophon *Qued Dunbar*.
- Poem 52** Base Text: Reidpath MS, fols. 5v–6r.  
5 *rink*. MS: altered to *rask*. Mc reads *rak*.
- 7 *thoecht*. Inserted above a deletion in MS.
- 16 *awir*. Inserted above the line in MS.
- 26 *fylfer*. In MS, a later insertion filling in a blank.
- Colophon *Qued Dunbar*.
- Poem 53** Base Text: Reidpath MS, fols. 6r–6v.  
8 *cfink*. Emendation for rhyme, following Mc, K, Bw. MS: *clank*.
- Colophon *Qued Dunbar*.

### *Textual Notes*

- Poem 54** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fols. 117v–118v; emendations from Asloan MS, fols. 211v–212v (lines 1–69 only).
- Title B: *Ane ballar of the fenyeit feir of Tungland: how he fell in the myre flead to Turkiland.*
- 30 *movy in.* MS: corrected from *in to*, followed by Mc, K. Bw adheres to the original MS reading.
- 56 *onoseking.* MS: *k* is inserted above the line.
- 67 *Martis.* MS: the canceled before.
- 104 *blak.* Supplied from As, followed by Mc, K, Bw.
- 111 *with.* MS: *quhi* canceled before.
- Colophon *Finit quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 55** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 3–5; emendations from Reidpath MS, fols. 8r–8v.
- 4 *gland.* So R. MS: *grand* (?).
- 6 Verse supplied from R, following Mc, K, Bw. MS is defective.
- 8 *Or.* So R, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *or*.
- 10 *comin in.* So Bw. MS, R: *com in*, followed by Mc, K emends to *com in to*, which satisfies the meter, as does *comin in*.
- 37–40 Verses supplied from R, following Mc, K, Bw. MS is defective.
- Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 56** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 340–41.
- 4 *The.* MS: corrected from *His.*
- 9 *cald.* MS: *mar* canceled before.
- 23 *hair.* Interlined in MS.
- 36 *Dowsteboir.* MS: *a* inserted above the line.
- 37 *louket.* MS: *a* inserted above the line.
- 42 *mirroir.* So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *mirror.*
- Colophon *Quod Dunbar of a dance in the quen[is] chalmer.*
- Poem 57** Base Text: Maitland Folio, p. 339.
- 1 *houre.* MS: *a* inserted above the line.
- 2 *doublerr.* MS: *a* inserted above the line.
- Colophon *Quod Dunbar of James Dog Kepair of the Quenir wardrep.*
- Poem 58** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 339–40.
- 7 *all.* Inserted above the line in MS.

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14      *taingir*. MS: *tang* canceled before.  
Colophon    *Quod Dunbar of the said James quhen he had plesett him.*

**Poem 59**    Base Text: Bannatyne Draft MS, pp. 53–54; emendations from Maitland Folio,  
                  pp. 11–12.  
20      *hes*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *had*, followed by Mc, K.  
21      *Rounydylir*. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *rowme ylir*.  
24      *Naw he dois*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *jin dois he*, followed by Mc, K.  
27      *lichr*. MS: *slicht* written first, then canceled.  
31      *fals*. So MF, followed by Mc, Bw. MS: *false*, followed by K.  
32      *all reffar*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *every*, followed by Mc, K.  
48      *Qwhill*. MS: *quyll* written first, then canceled.  
Colophon    *Finis quod Dunbar for Donald Orr's Eptaphie.*

**Poem 60**    Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 10–11.  
8      *dismemberit*. So R, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *dismeberit*.  
16      *awir*. MS: added in margin.  
18      *seaxowir*. MS: *rexowir* corrected in margin to *seaxowir*.  
Colophon    *Quod Dunbar.*

**Poem 61**    Base Text: Maitland Folio, p. 320.  
Colophon    *Quod Dunbar.*

**Poem 62**    Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fols. 214r–215r; emendations from Reidpath MS, fol.  
                  8r (lines 1–16 only).  
11      *rhamre*. So R, followed by Bw. MS: *hir*, followed by Mc, K.  
15      *Fresche*. Supplied from R, following Mc, K, Bw.  
18      *sauid*. So R, followed by Bw. MS: *sayis*, followed by Mc, K.  
19      *Strangenes*. Corrected in MS from *strangess*.  
30      *a feir*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *affeir*.  
87      *Gud*. MS: *hi* canceled after.  
90      *Hir*. MS: *h* canceled after.  
94      *he*. Supplied, following K, Bw. Mc omits.  
104     *Betwix*. MS: *the* deleted after.  
Colophon    *Finis d.c.*

*Textual Notes*

**Poem 63** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 322-23.

16 *goint*. MS: *f* canceled after.

Colophon *Quod Dunbar quhoue he list to fayre.*

**Poem 64** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fol. 212v.

22 *sor*. MS: *or* so canceled before.

Colophon *Finis ac. Dunbar.*

**Poem 65** Base Text: Chapman and Myllar Print, pp. 91-99.

Title *Here beginnes ane litil treatise intitulit the goldyn targe compilid by Maister Wylam Dunbar.*

14 *schake*. So B, MF, followed by Bw. Print: *schake*, followed by Mc, K.

16 *To part*. So Mc, K, B, MF: *Depart*, followed by Bw.

19 *happis*. So B, MF, followed by Bw, Mc. Print: *happis*, followed by K.

31 *wyft*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *wyft*.

32 *The*. So B, MF, followed by Bw. Print: *That*, followed by Mc, K.

39 *emeraunt*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *emeraunt*.

47 *soun*. Mc reads *sone*. K reads *soune*.

54 *falcoune*. Mc, K read *falcone*.

64 *Distrise*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *Distrise*.

90 *proporcione*. So Print, Mc, K. Bw: *propacion*.

103 *balletis*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *balletis*.

112 *the*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *te*.

139 *grene*. So Mc, K. Print: *grov*, followed by Bw.

140 *bowis*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *bowis*.

151 *Reson*. So Print, followed by Mc, K. Bw: *Reason*.

153 *that*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *this*.

165 *Discrecioon*. So Print, followed by Mc, K. Bw: *Discrecioon*.

187 *asker*. So B, MF. Print: *askers*, followed by Mc, K. Bw emends to *askeris*.

201 *assayit*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *assayes*.

203 *Qashil*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *Qashil*.

228 *takke*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *takke*.

231 *tochake*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *tochake*.

235 *scip*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *scip*.

254 *ane*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *and*.

259 *moscht*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *moschit*.

268 *write*. So K, Bw. Mc: *wryte*. Print: *writte*.

274 *her spowt*. So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw, MF: *may spend*. Print: *may spent*.

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**Poem 66** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fol. 283r-284v; emendations from Maitland Folio, pp. 165-68.

- 6      *losery*. MS: corrected from *lawrur*.  
23      *nsw*. MS: *noble* canceled before.  
35      *fall*. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *fable*.  
52      *here*. MS: *ek* canceled before.  
72      *hyses*. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *hyse*.  
74      *Ane man may in his lady tak*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *Man may tak in his*  
          *lady*, followed by Mc, K.  
75      *bestie*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *verwin*, followed by Mc, K.  
90      *Sic*. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Sir*.  
92      *rhai*. Inserted above the line in MS.  
99      *sic*. MS: *thame* canceled before.  
        *hardines*. MS: *ignorance* canceled before.  
108     *her*. Supplied from MF, following Bw.  
115     *iso*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *isit*, with *maid* added above line.  
116     *in rest and*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *in restand*, with *in* canceled.  
Colophon      *Finis quod Dunbar.*

**Poem 67** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fol. 281r.

- 11      *the schort*. MS: corrected from *with lang*.  
Colophon      *Finis quod Dunbar.*

**Poem 68** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fol. 284v-285v.

- 4      *ay*. Interlined in MS.  
19-20     The burden is abbreviated here and in subsequent stanzas.  
58      *sw*. Repeated in MS, then canceled.  
75-76     Verses are transposed in MS; in the margin are numbers correcting their order.  
84      *That*. MS: *So* canceled before.  
        *our*. MS: *my* canceled, *our* interlined to replace it.  
Colophon      *Finis quod Dunbar.*

**Poem 69** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fol. 116r-116v; emendations from Maitland Folio, pp. 335-37.

- Rablic      *Follows the woxing of the king / quhen he wes in Dumfermeling.*  
28      *that*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *this*, followed by Mc, K.  
35      *Refrain* abbreviated here and in subsequent stanzas.  
36      *hir . . . him*. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *him . . . hir*, where the sense  
          seems to be "pressed himself against her" rather than "drew her to him."

### *Textual Notes*

66      *bell.* So MF, followed by Mc, K, MS; *isaf*, followed by Bw.  
Colophon    *Quod Dunbar.*

**Poem 70**    Base Text: Maitland Folio, p. 342.  
1      *said.* So R, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *sad*.  
4      *soin.* So K, Mc, Bw read *soin*. R: *son*.  
28      *Hod.* Corrected from a cancellation in MS.  
Colophon    *Quod Dunbar.*

**Poem 71**    Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 341–42; emendations from Reidpath MS, fols. 45v–46r.  
9      *schou.* Supplied from R, following Mc, K, Bw, though Mc reads *scho*.  
Colophon    *Quod Dunbar of an blod mair.*

**Poem 72**    Base Text: Maitland Folio, p. 308 (for lines 1–28); p. 311 (for lines 29–63), following Barwick.  
16      *I.* Inserted above the line in MS.  
Colophon    *Quod Dunbar.*

**Poem 73**    Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 324–25; emendations from Bannatyne MS, fols. 261r–261v.  
7      *So.* So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *For*.  
44      *evidens.* So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *evidens*.  
Colophon    *Quod Dunbar.*

**Poem 74**    Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 314–15.  
Colophon    *Quod Dunbar.*

**Poem 75**    Base Text: Reidpath MS, fols. 1v–2v.  
7      *hurt.* So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *quyt* canceled.  
11      *fymmis.* MS: *fylltingis*, followed by Mc, K, Bw.  
15      *Staff.* MS: altered to *scall*.  
17      *fairstairis.* So Mc, Bw. MS: *fairstair*, followed by K.  
20      *polesie.* So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *poliesie*.  
25      *Jame.* So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *James*.  
27      *ik.* So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *il*.  
31      *serve.* MS: *schow* canceled.  
33      Line 34 is mistakenly written at the end of this line, then repeated below.  
37      *streitir.* So Mc, Bw. K emends to *streittir*. MS: *streit*.

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- 38 merchantis. MS: *merchandir*, followed by Mc, K, Bw.  
46 *rouse*. MS: *lamer* canceled before.  
61 Continues on same line as 60.  
67 proclaim. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *proclameid*.  
73 *fond*. MS: corrected from *send*.  
77 refer to. Conjectural emendation to fill blank space. Mc, Bw leave the space  
blank. K suggests *fwin bak tof*.  
**Colophon** *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 76** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fols. 115r-115v; emendations from Maitland Folio,  
pp. 333-34.  
**Title** MS: *Followir how Dunbar wes Deyrd to be aue Freir.*  
29 *fordeir*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *ony*. Mc, K follow the MS, but place the  
whole stanza (lines 26-30) after line 15 (i.e., as the fourth stanza). It appears as  
the fifth stanza in MF.  
39 *par*. MS: *b* canceled before.  
49 *hoss end*. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *houthead*.  
**Colophon** *Quod Dunbar.*
- Poem 77** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fols. 110r-112v; emendations from Maitland Folio,  
pp. 12-16, and Asloun MS, fols. 210r-211v.  
17 *hair*. So Mc, K. MS: *hair*, followed by Bw.  
35 *iso*. MS: all canceled before, *to* written above line.  
50 *in secreit places*. So MF, followed by Mc, Bw. MS: *of simbly racis*, followed by  
K.  
80 *Come*. Supplied from MF, following Mc, Bw. K omits.  
81 *Iythenes*. So MF, followed by K, Bw. MS: *julines*, followed by Mc.  
99 *creische*. MS: *creis* canceled before.  
112 *Be he the*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Be he be the*.  
131 *clayth*. MS: *beit* canceled before.  
137 *fillir*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *flowir*, followed by Mc, K.  
142 *come forth*. So MS, followed by Mc, K. As: *comfort*, followed by Bw.  
145 *The tasyneur hecht*. So Mc, K. As: *He hecht*, followed by Bw.  
149 *cverage*. So As, MF, followed by K. MS: *hairt*, followed by Mc, Bw.  
151 Entire verse supplied from MF, following Bw. MS: *And quhen to be sowtar he  
did cam*, followed by Mc, K.  
154 Entire verse supplied from As, following Bw. MS: *In horte he take sit sic ane  
scunner*, followed by Mc, K.

### Textual Notes

- 169 *talyour*. So As, MF, followed by Bw. MS: *teljour*, followed by Mc, K. Bw follows As, MF for the whole line: *Apon the talysour quaten he did hale.*
- 171 *Uewir he mychr*. So As, followed by Bw. MS: *He mychr nocht rycht*, followed by Mc, K.
- 173 *quhilk cost him*. So MF, Bw: *that cost him*. MS: *quhilk he cost*, followed by Mc, K.
- 174 *never*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *nevir*, followed by Mc, K.
- 177 *stynk than*. So As, followed by Bw. MS: *sair ryne*, followed by Mc, K.
- 187-88 As, MF: *That sparrit spore athir ryde, / The horse atour the grene did glyd,* followed by Bw.
- 189 *Than than*. So Mc, K. MF: *And than*, followed by Bw.
- 190 *The talysour war*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *The talysour bat wes*, followed by Mc, K.
- 193 *barnes*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *barnar*, followed by Mc, K.
- 200 *wend*. Mc, K read *went*. As: *Trowir*, followed by Bw.
- 201 *bene*. MS: *he canceled before*.
- 201 *storn*. So Mc, K. As: *strengt*, followed by Bw.
- 204 *Quyte our frome*. So As, followed by Bw. MF: *Quyte our frome*. MS: *Evin quyte frome*, followed by Mc, K.
- 206 *he strak til*. So Mc, K. As: *flewe to the*, followed by Bw.
- 207 *fartit*. So Mc, K. As, MF: *fort*, followed by Bw.
- 209 *The new maid keycht lay into swoun*. So As, followed by Bw. MS: *This new maid keychtir lay bayth in swoun*, followed by Mc, K.
- 210 *forewar*. So As, followed by Bw. MS: *metowair*, followed by Mc, K.
- 214 *bayth*. So MS, followed by Mc, K. As: *agone*, followed by Bw. MF: *ay*.
- 217 *of*. MS: *writtin canceled before*.
- 224 *To*. MS: *And connected to To*.
- 226 *To dyte how all this thing*. So As, followed by Bw. MS: *For this said isoting it*, followed by Mc, K.
- 228 *Schirris*. So As, MF, followed by Bw. MS: *Now*, followed by Mc, K.
- it. So As, MF, followed by Bw. MS: *this*, followed by Mc, K.
- Colophon *Heir andis the sowlar and talyouris war maid be the nobill poyet master William Dunbar.*

- Poem 78** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fol. 112v-113r; emendations from Maitland Folio, pp. 319-20.
- Title MS: *Followis the amondis maid be him to the talyouris and sowlaris for the turnament maid on thame.*
- 12 Refrain abbreviated here and in subsequent stanzas.

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- 20 Bot. MS: *Tely* canceled before.  
rham. MS: *rham*, followed by Mc, K, Bw.  
25 swayne. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *man*, followed by Mc, K.  
30 gad. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *gade* *crafy*.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*

- Poem 79** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fols. 132v–133r.  
20 Refrain abbreviated here and in subsequent stanzas.  
39 cowth. So Bw. Mc, K read *could*. MS: *qwith*.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*

- Poem 80** Base Text: Rosen Print, pp. 193–96.  
1 maister. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *maist*.  
47 hecht. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *hetir*.  
71 gif. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *hiſ*.  
74 Llego. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *Llego*.  
104 miscebam. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *missebam*.  
Colophon *Explicit.*

- Poem 81** Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 290–92; emendations from Bannatyne MS, fols. 102r–103v.  
Title *Dunbaris Dirige to the King*.  
14 iwo. So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *in*.  
34 monir. So Mc, K. Bw reads *mons*.  
46a Lectio secunda. Supplied from B, following Mc, K, Bw.  
49 sainr. So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *heuinſie court*.  
87 could ye. So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *ye could*.  
103 nr. Supplied from B, following Mc, K, Bw.  
Colophon *Dunbaris dirige to the King / Bykand our lang in Stirlng*.

- Poem 82** Base Text: Aberdeen Minute Book, II, p. 460.  
19 husband. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *urband*.  
21 echo. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *icbe*.  
22 ir. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *ale*.  
23 nocht. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *naccht*.  
24 glas. MS: *cop* canceled before.  
me to. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *to me*.  
Colophon *Quod Dunbar.*

### Textual Notes

- Poem B3** Base Text: Bannatyne MS, fols. 147r-154r (lines 1-315); Chepman and Myllar, pp. 137-44 (lines 316-552); emendations from Maitland Folio, pp. 53-54, 59-63, 69-72, 77-80.
- 18 *richt*. So MF, followed by Mc, Bw. MS: *for*, followed by K.  
28 *laureat*. MS: *lawe* canceled before.  
48 This line is added in the left margin in MS.  
51 *Densemar*. MF: *Densemēn*, followed by Bw.  
54 *royis*. MS: *reis* canceled before.  
58 *Skitterand scorpione, scawld*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *Scorth fra scorpione  
scawld*, followed by Mc, K.  
68 *To*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *The*.  
76 *cowart*. MS: added in the left margin.  
83 *glengeor lawe*. MF: *gængelaw*, followed by Bw.  
88 *recry it*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *recryar*, followed by Mc, K.  
92 *at*. So MF, followed by K, Bw. MS: *wes*, followed by Mc.  
wind *and*. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *wounds*.  
95 *sey*. Supplied from MF, following K, Bw. Mc omits.  
97 *rethore*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *rethory*, followed by Mc, K.  
102 *lauchane*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *lauchand*, followed by Mc, K (reading  
*farband*).  
106 *rejoys*. MS: *reis* canceled before.  
114 *pingill*. MS: *ale* canceled before.  
119 *gungill*. MS: *In* canceled before.  
120 *bratt*. So R, followed by Bw. MS: *clab*, followed by Mc, K.  
121 *losangeor, loway*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *losangeor bath loway*, followed  
by Mc, K.  
123 *Lawrance*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Lawarance*.  
129 *Commerworld*. So R, followed by Bw. MS: *Commiswold*, followed by Mc, K.  
133 *mair*. Corrected from *thair* in MS.  
135 *for wage*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *or at*, followed by Mc, K.  
139 *my*. So Bw. MS: *thy*, followed by Mc, K.  
152 *lymmerair*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *lymmerfall*, followed by Mc, K.  
160 *sacrime*. So MF, followed by Bw. K emends to *sacrand*. MS: *secirand*, which Mc  
reads as *secirind*.  
169 *linkis*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *lukis*, followed by Mc, K.  
175 *lenye*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *lowe*, followed by Mc, K.  
185 Entire verse supplied from MF, following Mc, K, Bw.  
197 *pywhippit*. So MF, followed by K, Bw. Mc reads *parschippit*. MS: *bippit*.  
*me*. So MF, followed by K, Bw. MS: *my*, followed by Mc.

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- 201 *burch*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *burcht*.  
217 *Edinburch*. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *Edinburcht*.  
218 *Hay*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *ay*, followed by Mc, K.  
231 *skellis*. MS: *skilis* canceled before.  
237 *fed*. Added above the line in MS.  
241 *byr*. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MS: *byle*.  
242 *flay*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *foule*, followed by Mc, K.  
251 *werwoif*. MS: *werf* canceled before.  
257 *forbear is*. So Bw. MS: *forbearis*, followed by Mc, K.  
261 *on*. So MF, followed by Bw. MS: *of*, followed by Mc, K.  
281 *Pert*. So Bw. MS: *Pert*, followed by Mc, K.  
283 *alvert*. So Bw. MS: *alverth*, followed by Mc, K.  
289 *abydus*. MS: *abydis* canceled after.  
290 *abydis*. MS: *among* canceled after.  
299 *Archebould*. So MF, followed by Bw. Mc, K read *Archibald*. MS: *Archibard*.  
316 ff. From this point on, Chapman & Myllar Print is used.  
325 *kneis*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *keneis*.  
329 *commixare*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *commixare*.  
332 *baff*. So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *baff*.  
335 *and*. So B, MF, followed by Bw. Print: *or*, followed by Mc, K.  
367 *For*. Supplied from B, following Bw.  
386 *erlit*. So Bw. Print: *erl*, followed by Mc, K.  
388 *tha*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *tha*.  
389 *wicht*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *wyth*.  
392 *dicht*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *dicht*.  
395 *Duerch*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *Duerth*.  
398 *thy scale*. So Bw. Print: *the scale*, followed by Mc, K.  
399 *thy hede*. So B, MF, followed by Bw. Print: *the hede*, followed by Mc, K.  
400 *for*. So MF, followed by Bw. Print: *wyk*, followed by Mc, K.  
408 *deserche*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *deserthe*.  
443 *trijt*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *trijt*.  
472 *esk*. So B, MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *esk*.  
483 *Lar*. So B, MF, followed by Bw. Print: *That*, followed by Mc, K.  
509 *skryp*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *skryp*.  
511 *clamischellis*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *clamischellis*.  
520 *mischance*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *mischanche*.  
526 *nase*. So B, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *nase*.  
526 *muncenorme*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *muncenorme*.  
530 *Egyptia*. So MF, followed by Bw. Print: *Egypys*, followed by Mc, K.

### Textual Notes

548      *Prikkit*. So MF, followed by Bw. Mc reads *Pickit*. K reads *Prickit*. Print: *Pirkit*.  
Colophon      MF: *Quod Kennedy to Dusshar*. No colophon in CM.

- Poem 84**      Base Text: Maitland Folio, pp. 81–84, for lines 1–103; Rouen Print, pp. 177–89, which lacks the initial two pages, for lines 104–530, with emendations from Maitland Folio, pp. 84–96. Paragraph divisions in the text are editorially supplied, following Kinsley.
- Title      MF: *Heir begins the Tretis of the Tisa Mariit Wener and the Wedo*.
- 1–103      Supplied from MF, as RP is missing the initial pages.
- 2      in. Supplied, following Bw.
- 18      garlansdr. MS: gor canceled before.
- 29      Now. So K, Bw. MS: New, followed by Mc.
- 30–38      Verses are faded and difficult to read.
- 36      tua. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: wyth tua.
- 40a      Followed in MS by *Aude viduam iam cum interrogacione suo* [Now hear the widow with her question].
- 48      Followed in MS by *Responsio prime sororis ad viduam* [The reply of the first wife to the widow].
- 62–65      Verses are faded and final words in each are uncertain.
- 66      feiris. So Mc, K, Bw. MS: freiris.
- 89a      Followed in MS by *Aude ut dicer de viro suo* [Hear how she talks about her husband].
- 98      gor. So K, Bw. Mc emends to goreis. MS: gor is.
- 104      From this point on, the text is that of RP. The compositor of RP often places a *t* where a *c* would normally be required: thus printing *leuch* for *leach* (line 147) or *raucht* for *raucht* (line 148). The compositor also has difficulty with *th* and *gh* endings, often spelling both as *tgh* (e.g., *riggh* for *right* [line 139], *witgh* for *with* [line 152]) or simply as *gt* (e.g., *dryggtis* for *drygghtis* [line 216]). Misprinting *e* for *u* or *a* for *u* is also common (e.g., *alverne* for *alerne* [line 192]). Such errors have been silently emended.
- 106      schenkt. K, Mc follow MF, which reads *schedkt*, the sense being that the husband "parts" her lips.
- 116      That. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *Tan*.
- 124      How. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *Ho*.
- 127      wairit. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *wairit*.
- 141      wod. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *wyod*.
- 149      Followed in MF by *Hic bibent et inde vidua interrogat alterum mulierem et ille responderet ut sequitur* [Here they drink and then the widow questions the second wife, and she responds as follows].

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- 150 so. Supplied from MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw.  
shir. So MF, followed by Bw. Print: shir, followed by Mc, K.  
man. So Print, followed by Mc, K, Bw. MF: men.  
*menekit*. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *menkit*.  
namen. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *sawy*.  
And. So Mc, Bw. Print: *An*, followed by K.  
ruth. So MF, followed by Bw. Print: *south*, followed by Mc, K.  
flarising. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *flarising*.  
into swosse. So Bw. Print: *in to swosse*. Mc, K: *in to swosse*.  
hairis. So Bw. Print: hair, followed by Mc, K.  
zemiz. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *suys*.  
domyx. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *days*.  
And. So Mc, Bw. Print: *An*, followed by K.  
effeſt. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *effeſt*.  
ſal be. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *salle*.  
or. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *(3)*.  
and. So MF, followed by Bw. Mc, K emend to or. Print: *or*.  
haſſ. Print: *J* canceled after.  
*fong in myn*. So Mc, Bw. Print: *fong i myn*. K: *fong in myn*.  
marmys. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *marmys*.  
qualy. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *qualy*.  
*my gud mor*. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *man gud my*.  
to that. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *to to that*.  
*Loud lauchand*. So MF, followed by Bw. Mc reads *Loudly lauchand*. K reads  
*Ladly lauchand*. Print: *Lady rauthand*.  
Followed in MF by *Nunc bibent et inde prime due interrogant vidiam et de sua*  
*responsione et quomodo erat* [Now they drink and then the first two question  
the widow, and concerning her reply and how it was].  
your. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *our*.  
innocent. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *I nicrit*.  
counterfeſt. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *comafeſt*.  
ben. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *beut*.  
claw. So MF, followed by Bw. Print: *keyrh*, followed by Mc. K reads *krych*.  
he. Supplied from MF, following Mc, K, Bw.  
*merchand*. So K, Bw. Mc reads *muchond*. Print: *nichand*.  
richandy. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *richandy*.  
mercy. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *nicy*.  
thor. So MF, followed by Bw. Print: *for*, followed by Mc, K.  
oarenumyn. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *oarenumyn*.

### *Textual Notes*

- 327 *sett.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *soit.*  
338 *biggingis.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *biggnigis.*  
344 *evidentis.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *evidentis.*  
345 *thaſi.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *ai.*  
346 *that.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *at.*  
346 *neir.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *neir.*  
347 *banchles.* So Mc, Bw. K reads *banchlis.* Print: *banchles.*  
362 *misteris.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *misteris.*  
364 *threw.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *thro*, with a macron over the *o*.  
368 *renouſe.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *renouſe*, with a macron over the *e*.  
369 *crafteſtly.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *crafteſtly.*  
371 *Thought.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *Tought.*  
374 *precious.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *precous.*  
377 *disk.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *deik.*  
396 *Anſ.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *Anſ.*  
408 *thir.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *ther.*  
409 *knowin.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *knowl.*  
410 *dvoour.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *dvoar.*  
417 *makis.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *makris.*  
421 *J.* Supplied from MF, following Mc, K, Bw.  
431 *chafmer.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *chafis*, with a macron over the *a*.  
433 *threw.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *tro*, with a macron over the *o*.  
434 *threw.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *thro*, with a macron over the *o*.  
435 *corſtly.* So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *corſtly.*  
451 *women.* So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *men.*  
453 *convoiſ.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *gvoiſ.*  
456 *to.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *te.*  
458 *thaim.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *haiſ.*  
464 *woman.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *woman.*  
466 *zohir.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *zovir.*  
469 *service.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *service.*  
480 *rosaſis.* So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *rosaſis.*  
490 *sittis.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *sittir.*  
491 *samis.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *samis*, with a macron over the *s*.  
492 *sittis.* Supplied from MF, following Mc, K, Bw.  
495 *specialiſ.* So Mc, K, Bw. MS: *speſialiſ.*  
507 *said thaſi ſuld.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *said thaſi ſuld.*  
510 *going.* So Mc, K, Bw. Print: *goſig.*  
516 *ſchill.* So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: *ſtill.*

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- 518      gloria. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: glornir.  
520      and. Supplied from MF, following Mc, Bw. K omits.  
              singing. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: singeing.  
523      thir. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: ryer.  
524      throw. So Mc, K, Bw. Print: thro, with a macron over the o.  
529      thir. So MF, followed by Mc, K, Bw. Print: yer.  
Colophon      Print: *Quod Dunbar; MF: Quod Maister Willame Dunbar.*

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## Glossary

### A Basic Note on Vocabulary

Dunbar's poetry is written in the dialect known today as Middle Scots. As such, the reader of Chaucerian Middle English will have relatively little trouble reading Scots, provided that some basic dialectal differences are borne in mind.

**Vowels:** (1) long vowels are often marked by combination of the vowel and a subsequent *i* in Middle Scots ("speir" for *spear* — Poem 1, line 12; "glaid" for *glad* — Poem 1, line 17; "meik" for *meek* — Poem 1, line 15); (2) Middle Scots sometimes uses an *o* where we anticipate an *ə* ("lang" for *long* — Poem 2, line 49; "behald" for *behold* — Poem 2, line 102); (3) the letters *i* and *y* are interchangeable in Middle Scots ("incline" for *inclose* — Poem 1, line 25); final *-e* is generally silent (except where accented in the text), but sometimes does act as a sign denoting a preceding long vowel ("rute" for *root* — Poem 1, line 41).

**Consonants:** (1) where we might expect a *gh* in Middle English, Middle Scots often substitutes a *ch* ("beycht" for *bright* — Poem 1, line 3); (2) where we might expect a *mb* we often find *mn* or simply *m* ("lymmis" for *limbs* — Poem 2, line 66); *th* is replaced by *dd* or *d* quite frequently ("fedder" for *feather* — Poem 13, line 8); Middle English *wl* is most often represented by *qlh* ("quhorne" for *whom* — Poem 1, line 5); final *d* is replaced by *t* ("passit" for *passed* — Poem 1, line 37); *sh* is often represented by *sch*, as is initial *s* ("schouris" for *showers* — Poem 1, line 2; "schir" for *sir* — Poem 14, line 63); initial *h* is occasionally silent and/or dropped ("armony" for *harmony* — Poem 1, line 50); vocalization of /l/ after back vowels is inconsistent ("aw" for *all* — Poem 14, line 85; but see line 51, "all"); also, metathesis is characteristic of Middle Scots ("brist" for *burst* — Poem 2, line 74).

For a brief overview of the grammar of the dialect, see C. I. MacAfee, "A Short Grammar of Older Scots," *Scottish Language* 11/12 (1992–93), 10–36. For help on the pronunciation of Scots, see Adam J. Aitken, "How to Pronounce Older Scots," in *Rords and Makars*, ed. Adam J. Aitken, et al. (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1977), pp. 1–21.

<b>agane</b>	again	<b>and</b>	and; if
<b>agans</b>	against	<b>an(e)</b>	a(n); one
<b>ald</b>	old	<b>anether</b>	another
<b>alkin</b>	every kind of	<b>anis</b>	once
<b>allane</b>	alone	<b>apon(e)</b>	upon
<b>als</b>	also; at	<b>ar</b>	are
<b>amang</b>	among	<b>askis</b>	asks

## Glossary

<b>at(i)our</b> over, above	<b>feir</b> fear
<b>Aurora</b> the Dawn	<b>fer</b> far
<b>avallis</b> avails, helps	<b>fle</b> fly
<b>awin</b> own	<b>fleur, fleuris</b> flower, flowers
<b>ay</b> always, ever	<b>for yet</b> forget
<b>bu(i)th</b> both	<b>fra, fro</b> from
<b>be</b> by; when	<b>fool</b> fool
<b>befair</b> before	<b>furth</b> forth
<b>begowthe</b> began	 
<b>bene</b> be; it; are; been	<b>ga</b> go
<b>bot</b> ; but; but; only; without	<b>gaddir</b> gather
<b>cleir, clere</b> clear; bright	<b>galf</b> gave
<b>come</b> come	<b>gang</b> go; walk
<b>couth</b> ; could	<b>gart</b> caused
<b>cum</b> come	<b>gif(f)</b> if; give
 	<b>gr(e)it</b> great
<b>dair</b> dare	<b>gud(e)</b> good
<b>de</b> die	 
<b>deid</b> dead; death; deed	<b>half</b> have; keep
<b>deir</b> dear	<b>haill</b> healthy; whole
<b>deit</b> died	<b>hale</b> hail
<b>dois</b> does	<b>hat(u)ld</b> hold
<b>down</b> down	<b>hame</b> home
<b>durst</b> dared	<b>hard</b> heard
 	<b>hart(e)</b> heart
<b>e</b> eye, eyes	<b>heff</b> have
<b>efter</b> after	<b>heich</b> high; loud
<b>eik</b> also	<b>heir</b> here; hear; listen
<b>eir</b> ear	<b>hes</b> has
<b>eke</b> also	<b>hew</b> hue, color
<b>ellis</b> else	<b>hir</b> her
<b>ene</b> eyes	 
<b>erd</b> earth	<b>ill</b> each; same
 	<b>into</b> in; into
<b>fang</b> take	<b>inv</b> envy
<b>fals</b> false	<b>keep</b> keep
<b>fane</b> glad; gladly	<b>ken</b> know; teach
 	<b>kest</b> cast

### Glossary

<b>kirk(e)</b>	<i>church</i>	<b>prys</b>	<i>great wealth</i>
<b>knew</b>	<i>know</i>	<b>par(e)</b>	<i>poor</i>
<b>laithly</b>	<i>loathly, disgusting</i>	<b>qaha</b>	<i>who</i>
<b>lang</b>	<i>long</i>	<b>qahair</b>	<i>where</i>
<b>lat(t)</b>	<i>let; allow; prevent</i>	<b>qahais</b>	<i>whose</i>
<b>law</b>	<i>law</i>	<b>qaham(e)</b>	<i>whom</i>
<b>leif</b>	<i>leave; live</i>	<b>qahar(e)</b>	<i>where</i>
<b>lik, lyk</b>	<i>like</i>	<b>qahat</b>	<i>what</i>
<b>lif(f)</b>	<i>live</i>	<b>qahen</b>	<i>when</i>
<b>lik(e)</b>	<i>look</i>	<b>qahilk</b>	<i>which; who</i>
<b>lusty</b>	<i>joyful; pleasant</i>	<b>qahill</b>	<i>while; until; which</i>
<b>ma</b>	<i>more</i>	<b>qahit(e)</b>	<i>white</i>
<b>maile</b>	<i>more</i>	<b>qaho</b>	<i>who</i>
<b>maist</b>	<i>most</i>	<b>qahois</b>	<i>whose</i>
<b>mak</b>	<i>make</i>	<b>qahom(e)</b>	<i>whom</i>
<b>man</b>	<i>man; man</i>	<b>qahone</b>	<i>when</i>
<b>mekill</b>	<i>much; large</i>	<b>qahow</b>	<i>how</i>
<b>moist</b>	<i>moist</i>	<b>quhy</b>	<i>why</i>
<b>mon(e)</b>	<i>most</i>	<b>quhyte</b>	<i>white</i>
<b>mony</b>	<i>many</i>	<b>quyk</b>	<i>living</i>
<b>mot</b>	<i>most; many</i>	<b>quad</b>	<i>said</i>
<b>na</b>	<i>no; nor; than</i>	<b>riale, riall</b>	<i>royal</i>
<b>nam(e)</b>	<i>none; not one</i>	<b>richt</b>	<i>very</i>
<b>nist</b>	<i>next</i>	<b>rin</b>	<i>run</i>
<b>nocht, naught</b>	<i>not; nothing</i>	<b>sa</b>	<i>so</i>
<b>nor</b>	<i>nor; than</i>	<b>sal(l)</b>	<i>shaft</i>
<b>nowder</b>	<i>neither</i>	<b>Salvator</b>	<i>Savior</i>
<b>o(s)ght</b>	<i>anything</i>	<b>sam</b>	<i>same</i>
<b>on(e)</b>	<i>on; in</i>	<b>sang</b>	<i>song</i>
<b>ony</b>	<i>any</i>	<b>sary</b>	<i>sorry</i>
<b>or</b>	<i>or; before, ere</i>	<b>schaw</b>	<i>show</i>
<b>orient</b>	<i>eastern</i>	<b>schene</b>	<i>bright; beautiful</i>
<b>our</b>	<i>over; our</i>	<b>schir</b>	<i>sir</i>
<b>pennis</b>	<i>feathers</i>	<b>scho(u)</b>	<i>she</i>
		<b>se</b>	<i>see</i>
		<b>selik</b>	<i>seek</i>

## Glossary

<b>sen</b> since; then	<b>trew</b> true
<b>sic</b> such	<b>trow</b> believe
<b>soone</b> soon; not; soon	<b>take</b> too
<b>should</b> should	<b>talk</b> took
<b>stan(e)</b> stone	<b>twa</b> two
<b>sus</b> so; thus	
<b>suld</b> should	<b>udir, other</b> other
<b>sum</b> some	
<b>suppels</b> although	<b>walld</b> would
<b>swe</b> so; thus	<b>wait(t)</b> know(s)
<b>synce</b> since; then; therefore; sin	<b>wald</b> would; wished
<b>ta the one</b>	<b>walk</b> walk
<b>ta(l)k</b> take	<b>war</b> were
<b>tane</b> taken	<b>world</b> world
<b>thaſt, thay</b> they; those	<b>well, wele</b> weal; prosperity; well
<b>thaim</b> them	<b>weir</b> war; doubt; wear
<b>thair</b> their; there	<b>wene</b> think; suppose
<b>than</b> then	<b>wes</b> was
<b>thaſt</b> their	<b>wicht</b> person
<b>that</b> who; that	<b>wirk</b> work; make
<b>think</b> seem	<b>we</b> we, misery
<b>thir</b> these; them	<b>wode</b> mad
<b>thoſcht</b> thought; although	<b>wrocht</b> made
<b>thow</b> thou (you)	<b>ye</b> you
<b>threw</b> through	<b>yeld</b> went
<b>thruſh</b> through	<b>yeir</b> year
<b>till</b> until; to; for	<b>yit</b> yet; still
<b>togidder</b> together	<b>yon(e)</b> that
<b>tother</b> the other	<b>yow</b> you